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INNES OF BLAIRAVON

BY

COLIN MIDDLETON

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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INNES OF BLAIRAVON.

CHAPTER I.

‘Oh! lives there, Heaven, beneath thy dread expanse
One hopeless, dark idolator of chance?’

‘I AM dog-sick of it,’ said the one, suddenly.

‘Humph,’ grunted the other, and the conversation ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

The speakers were two men, both with short briar pipes in their mouths. They were sitting side by side on the ground, leaning against a small, roughly-built log-hut, which was prettily situated on the bank of a stream which murmured in a gentle, soothing manner at their feet. It

was the month of October, 1856, in Victoria, Australia. The sun had just set, and the short Australian twilight was fast deepening into darkness, black and impenetrable. The hut lay in the valley of the Loddon, a name which somehow or other seems to suggest green meadows and darting trout far away in happy England. For about a mile up the left bank of the stream, on which the hut stood, the ground had been cleared, and was covered with shallow pits. The soil looked, in consequence, as though it had been visited by a sudden and sharp attack of small-pox, and there had been no collodion handy. On the opposite side of the stream the gum-trees stretched away into the distance ; below the hut, gum-trees ; up the stream yet once more gum-trees, rising gradually till their blue crests seemed to mingle with the blue of the sky. The home of solitude and silence. In a few minutes' time, when the last Chinaman has washed

his last handful of earth and gone to his rest and devotions, not a sound will be heard save the gentle murmur of the brook as it plays at their feet, always supposing that the Chinaman has sought his opium pipe, through which he may reach for a time the realms of eternal bliss. For at times the Chinaman, if he fancies that the spirits of evil are ‘on his track’ more pertinaciously than usual, will make night hideous with maroons and other infernal machines. The stench of burnt gunpowder which this performance produces, and the oppression in the atmosphere caused by his prayers and incantations, is so overwhelming, that no spirit, good or evil, who has the smallest pretence to respectability, dare approach. After making himself unnecessarily warm over this performance, and having driven his neighbours to thoughts of murder and arson, he will retire to his opium, and then—the deep, unbroken silence of the grave.

The man who had spoken first was a tallish, splendidly-made young man, with raven-black hair and deep-blue eyes. His name was Richard Innes, late of Oriel College, Oxford. After the brief conversation related above, he puffed hard at his pipe for some time, and then said as suddenly as before, and speaking as though he were merely uttering his thoughts aloud,

‘ Yes, Harry, old chap, I think I would have been wiser to enlist and have gone out to the Crimea.’

‘ Bosh !’ said the other man, and smoked ferociously, and the conversation ceased again.

The latter speaker was a short, thick-set man, with dark-brown hair, and dark-brown eyes set very near together, eyes that never stayed fixed on anything for an instant—shifty, uncertain eyes. After the last effort, they both sat gazing at the gum-trees growing dimmer and dimmer on the other side of the river. They were

picturesquely dressed. Both wore coarse woollen shirts, the dark man a scarlet one, and the other man a blue one, and corduroy trousers tucked into long Wellington boots. Their hats were like exaggerated Spanish sombreros, only instead of being folded in at the crown, they ran to a peak. Both wore narrow yellow belts, in one side of which a knife, and in the other a pistol was stuck. After some five minutes' silence the smaller man continued,

‘Ten to one you would have been shot.’

‘Well, I daresay that would be an easier death than starvation, and that’s the only prospect I see in front of us. We have been pottering about this infernal valley of the Loddon for nearly ten months, and we haven’t washed ten pounds’ worth of gold, though I daresay those particularly festive-looking Chinamen who wash our leavings have made something out of it;’ and, as he spoke, he pointed to some shadowy forms about a quarter-of-a-mile off,

who were still puddling away in the all-but darkness.

‘ That’s true, Dick, and devilish little I have contributed to our keep in that time.’

‘ Never mind about that,’ said Innes. ‘ We agreed to share everything we had, or should get, a year ago, and because I happen to have had a few sovereigns to start on, that’s no reason why you should not be the man to strike “ ile ” in the end. But I am sick of it, I tell you ; dog-sick of it. At any rate, Harry, if we don’t come on something soon we must leave this place. I have very little money left, and we can’t live on air.’

‘ All right,’ said the other man, ‘ live on hope.’

After this they were silent for nearly half-an-hour, when the man called Harry knocked the ashes out of his pipe on his boot, rose, and said,

‘ Good-night, Dick, I am going to turn in. Pleasant dreams, old cock, good-night.’

'Good-night,' answered Innes; and then he said to himself, 'Pleasant dreams!' He sighed, and muttered half-aloud, 'So this is the end of it all? A fortune—good God!' and he laughed a short laugh. 'The old place as it was forty years ago! By gad, I think a parson's coat would have been better, after all, than starvation in Victoria.—What a rum fellow Reid is.—He never seems disturbed by anything. When I first saw him he was sitting on a stump, whistling, without a cent in his pocket; and then, when I asked him the way to the Loddon valley, he said, "Going there myself—I'll show you;" and when I found out that he had not had any food for thirty-six hours, he merely said, "No use talking about it; won't bring food any quicker." Well, he has been a true enough mate to me, and that is all I care about. I never saw a man work as he does, but in a dogged hopeless sort of way, just like a Chinaman. I suppose I had better turn in too.'

Two days later they were sitting in the evening as before, in front of the hut, smoking.

'To-morrow is our last day here, Harry,' said Innes; 'if we don't find gold we must "lift."

'All right,' answered Reid, who never used more words than were actually necessary; 'go to Castlemaine, get work at five bob a day anyhow.'

Sleep refused to visit Innes's eyelids that night, and in the morning he got up very early with a set purpose. Before he went out he wrote on the back of an old envelope, with a stump of lead pencil, 'If I am not back at sundown, I shall be dead.' This he put inside the pan which he knew Reid would use in the evening. He wrapped up all the money he had left in the envelope, and addressed it to Reid. Then he left for his claim, taking his revolver with him. His claim was about half-a-mile further up the river than the one

which Reid was working, and as he went up he noticed that all the Chinamen had disappeared, and he said to himself,

'We are a couple of fools to think of making anything in a place which even the Chinamen have left.' When he reached his claim he sat down with his head between his hands and thought thus: 'I should like to have seen Blairavon again—only once again. But I can't go back in this plight, after all my boasts before I started. No. To-day settles the matter. If I don't come on gold before to-night, I will put an end to myself. Harry's all right. He won't starve. He'll be sorry for me, but I daresay he will soon forget.'

This decision had been arrived at in no hurry; Innes had quite calmly thought the matter over. He was not melancholy, or in love, or otherwise insane. He had shown 'no cursed hankering after purling streams.' Not at all. He had deliberately

come to the conclusion that it ‘wasn’t good enough.’ He thought that the world would be better off without him, so he had determined to leave it, without troubling anyone in any way in the matter.

That day he worked as he had never worked in his life, but with no sign of gold. It was getting well on into the afternoon when he said to himself,

‘I think I will knock off for an hour before sundown, just to collect myself before I go to—Lord knows where. I’ll just have one more dig on this side.’ He dug out enough earth to fill his cradle, and washed it, and looked at it in an idle sort of way, just as he had looked at it thousands of times before. What! could it be true? He looked again. Yes, sure enough. ‘By gad, it’s gold,’ he said; ‘little enough, but gold.’ He put down his spade. ‘Gold, that means that I am not going on my last long journey just yet;’ and he drew a sigh of relief.

He was not the sort of man to go mad

over the discovery of gold, so after digging and washing for about an hour, and having got about two ounces, he struck work, sat down beside his claim, and thought. (One had considerable time for thought in those spots at that time.) Presently his thoughts took shape.

‘I suppose there must be a Providence knocking about this old world somewhere or other. Now I wonder why on all days of this blessed year I should find gold to-day? Ever since I came here I have, day by day, been losing all the faith I ever had. It is hard to be a Christian in a country where one never hears anything but the talk of gold, and oaths and filth; and when one rolls into bed at night one is too tired to think of anything.’

And then he fell a-thinking that it was many and many a weary day since he had offered up that simple prayer that ought to ‘bind the whole round earth about the feet of God.’

‘Gad, I haven’t prayed since I was in

the old parish church at home, and I don't think I did too much of it then. I may as well begin again now.' (It is pleasant to have something to hang on to in time of trouble, by the way.)

He looked around him to make sure that no human eye could see him, being overcome by that curious sense of shame and fear of discovery which almost every Englishman displays when intent on private devotions. He was safe enough there. Not even a Chinaman to eye him in amazement. A somewhat incongruous and curious sight to see a strong man kneeling beside a gold claim on an evening in summer, but had you been there on that particular evening at the end of October, 1856, you would have witnessed the aforesaid curious sight.

The revulsion of feeling which came to him after having made up his mind to do something foolish and ridiculous and wrong, and which had thus been prevented by

chance, was curiously refreshing. He rose from his knees and gazed at the setting sun, and said to himself, with a sort of gasp of pleasure,

‘I am glad I am not going down with you to-night, my friend.’ He sat musing for a time, and then muttered, ‘What an ass I was to think of shooting myself! While there is life, there is hope.’

He took up his pick and shovel and strode along homewards, whistling the while the air of a favourite old Scotch song, ‘The Laird of Cockpen.’ Soon he began to sing it. Just as he was rolling out,

‘And wha could refuse the Laird wi’ a’ that?’

he stopped suddenly with a start, and dropped his pick and shovel. In the still clear water of a pool in the Loddon he had seen a sight calculated to make any man’s heart stand still. Standing upright in the pool, the top of his head about a foot below the surface of the water, was a Chinaman,

whom Innes recognized as a man called Li Chung, supposed to have made quite a little pile of money. He stared at the figure and said,

‘How on earth can he be standing upright like that? He’s stone dead, that’s clear enough. Well, I suppose we must fish him out and bury him to-morrow.’

Innes pursued his way homewards, but he did not sing any more. His thoughts, moreover, were not particularly pleasant.

‘And I might have been like that by now—yes, I think I have had a pretty good antidote against suicide.’

When he had gone about three hundred yards, he saw Reid running along the bank at full speed. Directly he caught sight of Innes, however, he stopped running, put his hands in his pockets and lounged along nonchalantly, as though running were the last thing he had ever thought about. As they met Reid said,

‘ Hallo, Dick ! Haven’t shot yourself ? Glad of that, old man. Should have felt very lonely without you ;’ and as he said it he took Innes’ disengaged arm and looked in his face. ‘ Why, you look scared, Dick.’

‘ Yes, Harry, I have just seen Li Chung in the pool below the plank-bridge, standing upright in the water, drowned as dead as a rat.’

‘ Li Chung ? Then he has been robbed and murdered by his friends.’

‘ Very possibly ; but how the deuce is he standing upright in the water ?’

‘ Old trick,’ answered Reid. ‘ Shot in his boots. Fanciful people the Chinese. Better chance of facing difficulties in the next world, if he enter it standing up. Bury him to-morrow.—May go to heaven if we give him a Christian burial.—Hasn’t a dog’s chance otherwise.’

‘ Harry, I have found gold.’

' I thought so, that's why I didn't hear any pistol report. Dick, you're a d----d fool. Much ?'

' No, but I think there's more.'

' All right, let's eat, and then you can tell me all about it over our pipes.'

CHAPTER II.

‘ Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud ;
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud.’

AFTER finishing the extremely meagre fare which served for supper—it consisted of tea, a damper, and some salt pork—they lit their pipes and sat down in front of the hut. Innes told Reid all that had happened to him during the day, after which, *à propos* of Li Chung and crime in general, he favoured him with a long sermon on the sin of suicide, at which Reid smiled somewhat sarcastically, and said,

‘ Suits you very well, Dick. You ought to have been a parson.’

‘ So I should be, if I were not at this present moment sitting on the ground,

smoking a clay pipe in this most bestial valley of all valleys in the world.'

It was not that by a very long way ; but a man is apt to be discontented with his surroundings when he subsists mainly on mouldy flour and salt junk.

' More respectable, anyhow,' said Reid, ' and though a devilish poor trade as a rule, I'm hanged if I don't think it would have paid better than this. What do you mean, Dick, when you say that you would have been a parson by now ? Parsons ain't built on your lines, as a rule.'

' Well, Harry, I will tell you. It is a curious thing that we should have been so reticent about our former life, for I think we trust one another thoroughly enough. I don't suppose you have the faintest notion why I came out to Australia ?'

' No,' answered Reid. ' Often wondered why you didn't stay at home—for you seemed to have a few hundred pounds, and this cursed hole is only the last refuge

for the destitute, to my mind. Fine society scattered over this little island : convicts, thieves, bushrangers, scamps, ne'er-do-wheels, and a few broken-down gentlemen, who are worse than all the rest put together. Nice place, take it all round, especially when you haven't seen ten pounds' worth of gold for a year.'

This was such an alarmingly long speech for Reid that Dick Innes was amazed, and said, ' You seem to have a grudge against the place.'

' No reason to,' answered Reid ; ' refuge for the destitute. I am the destitute.'

Although Innes had been reticent about his past life, he had at least given Reid some few particulars of it, whereas so far Reid had never dropped the least hint as to his English days. Innes suspected misfortune, probably a love-affair. He never attempted in any way to extract confidences from him—thinking that it would be futile, and also knowing that if

he waited long enough companionship would inspire a desire for sympathy.

'Well, Harry,' Innes continued, 'we'll take a slack day to-morrow, and go into Vaughan and pick up some provisions. To-morrow is Saturday, so we can take a holiday, and go to bed late to-night, and, if it won't bore you, I will tell you why I came out to Australia. It will take some time, so you had better light a fresh pipe before I begin.'

'Fire ahead, Dick; I'm ready.'

'I will begin at the beginning. You know my name, and if you know anything of Scotland, you will know that it is a good enough name, though you may be quite sure that I have no desire to make it out any better than it is. It is well enough known in Ayrshire, where my home is, or rather was. There are heaps of Inneses in Roxburghshire, too—'

'Know the name well,' interrupted Reid—'two at Eton with me.'

‘ I didn’t know you had been at Eton, Harry.’

‘ Daresay not. Did not do much credit to it, anyhow. Go on, Dick.’

‘ My father, who died just a year ago, as I told you in January, was owner of one of the most beautiful estates in Ayrshire, which I hope to see again some day. It was at one time very much larger than it was when I knew it, but, as only part of it is entailed, it has varied considerably in size in the last hundred years or so. We Inneses have always been a very curious lot, alternately wildly extravagant and absurdly thrifty. My grandfather was one of the thrifty sort. He lived almost a hermit’s life after his wife’s death, which happened when he was thirty years old. She died in giving birth to my father. For forty years he scraped and saved, and bought all the farms he could lay his hands on, with the result that the property was worth eight or nine thousand a-year at his death. He left

it all to my father, who dissipated it as rapidly as he could. He always had the house crammed in autumn, and spent the winter and spring in London, where he entertained like a prince. The result of all this was, that he began to sell the farms which my grandfather had bought, and finally, when I left England, the place was not worth a third of what it had been worth. His expenditure had, however, practically ceased two years before that time, when my mother died, and he more or less retired into a private way of living. I had been at Winchester—— Does this bore you, Harry ?'

‘ Go on, Dick ; it’s like a book.’

‘ —At Winchester until my mother’s death, and my brother had just come down from Oxford, where he had done very well in the schools. My mother died in August, and in October I went up to Oriel, under the impression that I was to go to the Bar. It was my own desire, and my father had

never in any way opposed it. I had a glorious time for two years at Oxford, doing pretty well everything, and reading pretty well besides. I was told I should get a first in Classical Mods, when I went down at the end of the Easter term; but, as luck would have it, in the summer term I got back my form at cricket, which I had completely lost the previous summer. I had a chance for the 'Varsity eleven. I was very keen on it, and my reading went to pieces, with the result that I played against Cambridge, and only got a second in Mods. This did not trouble me much. It was good enough, as I was going to read Law and History, and not classics, for the rest of my time. However, my father, for some reason or another, cut up rough about this. He had with difficulty taken a pass degree himself. I don't want to decry my father, Harry, but I must tell you that he was a pompous old stick. He said that if I was only capable of getting a second in

Mods, it was quite clear that I had not brain enough for the Bar, and that he could not afford to keep me doing nothing for years in London, and so on. I said that I should have got a first if I had not played in the 'Varsity eleven. Then he said, "Then you should not have played in the 'Varsity eleven, sir. I know that cricket is becoming all the rage at the universities now, together with boating and steeplechasing, and all that sort of thing ; but I did not send you to the university to play cricket, sir, but to work. Now I have decided that as the income from this estate is so small"—he didn't appear in the least degree ashamed that it was his fault that it was so—"it is barely enough for Alistair to live on as an Innes of Blairavon should live, I have decided that you shall take orders." I explained to him that I had no inclination to take orders. "Pooh, pooh," said he, "don't talk to me about inclination ; the inclination will come

when you begin to read for the Church. There were some devilish fast-living, hard-riding men in my time, who made rattling good parsons after they got out of the old Oxford set. Don't tell me that you have no inclination." I told him that I didn't think it was possible for a man to be a good parson unless he thoroughly loved his work, and chose the profession of his own accord. He pished and pshawed and wanted to know when it had become fashionable for sons to teach their fathers what was right and what was wrong, and finally wound up by saying, " You go into the Church, sir, or to Australia or Timbuctoo, or wherever you like in a week—I'll give you one week to think about it." It didn't need any thinking about. I occupied that week in collecting all my belongings which I thought would be of any service to me in such an outlandish place as Australia, and had two days' shooting with old Gilchrist the head-

keeper, among the grouse and blackcock and hill-partridges—it was about the second week in September that my father exploded this mine under my feet. I shall never forget old Gilchrist. I think I can almost hear him speaking now. Dear old soul! I think I can see him now with his long white, curly hair and his Balmoral bonnet. “Hech, sirs!” was his favourite method of starting anything he had to say. I will try to reproduce the Lowland Scotch which I love so well—do you mind, Harry?’

‘Talk Chinese, if you like, it is as good as a novel ; fire ahead, Dick.’

‘Well, old Gilchrist—he was sixty then, and had taught me to shoot eleven years before—and I were walking home, and he said, “Eh, Maister Richard, ye were aye a bonnie shot, but I never see ye shut like ye did the day. Mon, it did me auld een guid to see the way ye whanged ‘em ower amang the busses doon by the burn.” “I am glad I shot well to-day, Gilchrist,” I

answered, “ because it is probably the last time I shall ever shoot on Blairavon moor.” “ What’s a’ wi ye, laddie ; what’s that ye’re sayin’ ?” “ I mean it, Gilchrist,” I answered ; “ in two days from now I am going to Glasgow, and am going to sail for Australia to try to make a fortune, and perhaps buy back all the farms that have slipped away lately, for Mr. Alistair.” “ Hech, sirs, did ye iver hear the likes o’ that ; but ye dinna mean it, Maister Richard ?” “ Yes, I do, though, Gilchrist.” “ Aweel, I’m no carin’ muckle whether ony pairson iver shuts again on Blairavon for iver. Sin’ I lairnt ye tae shut mesel’, I dinna care owre muckle for the day’s sport if ye are no there to share it.” As he said this I saw the old man wipe his eyes furtively with the back of his hand. “ Never mind, Gilchrist, perhaps I shall be back again before we know where we are, and we’ll make Blairavon shooting what it was in my grandfather’s time.” “ Ay, I mind

the auld laird sayin' the hindmost time he iver cam' oot o' the hoose, that Blairavon was the bonniest shuttin' i' the haill o' Ayrshire, an' he hoped that it would aye be the same, and as he said it he kind o' keeked at me, as though to say, 'An' it depends a guid deal on you, Gilchrist.' An' so it was, so it was, Maister Richard, so long as we had it a' in ae piece; but as sune as iver it began to be cut up, wi' ae farm here and ae farm there, it was nae use for laigh ground shuttin', but the muir's as guid as iver it was, and as lang as auld Gilchrist can watch it, it'll aye be the same. Guid necht to ye, Maister Richard." My father and I did not take long to settle matters at the end of the week. I told him that my mind was made up, and that I could never be a parson. He replied that I was a fool, and did not know which side my bread was buttered, and various other remarks of that sort, and finally finished by saying, "Well, Dick,

you know I am poor," (I thought to myself, "I wonder whose fault that is?") "but here is a cheque for five hundred pounds, which will start you in Australia." I was not too proud to take the money, because I thought that, at such short notice, I really deserved some recompense for the loss of what, I had assured myself, would have been a great career at the Bar. I suppose I ought to have torn up the cheque, thrown the pieces on the ground, and stood with head erect and flashing eyes, and said, "An Innes does not take bribes, sir!" or some nonsense to that effect. But I didn't. I took the cheque and thanked him, and in two days I had left the old home, after bidding a sad farewell to Alistair, my brother, of whom I was very fond, and commanding my dogs to the care of old Gilchrist, who was terribly cut-up. I was a great favourite with the old man. I started for Glasgow, and in two days was sailing down the Clyde. As

I passed by Ailsa Craig the tears rose unbidden to my eyes as I thought how often I had watched the sun set in a cloud of glory behind it, from the hills above the house, and wondered to myself if I should see it again. I don't suppose I ever shall, old cock, and yet I would give a good deal to stand on that hill and watch him set once more, before I die. Bah! I am talking rot now. I am only twenty-three, and talking about death. By Jove! I was precious near it this afternoon.'

' Humph !' grunted Reid.

' Well, after that there is not much to tell. I came out here and landed in Melbourne, which was not a prepossessing place by any means ; after fooling around there for nearly three months, and losing one hundred pounds or so at cards with the various scamps and rogues who were there assembled, and spending about a hundred more, I started for this place, having heard that there was gold about.

On my way I met you, and you know the rest. I must tell you that when my father died, he left nothing but the bare estate to my brother, nothing to me.'

Reid sat silently puffing at his pipe, and after some minutes Innes said,

'Well, Harry, what do you think of my performance?'

'Think you an inconceivable ass,' grunted Reid. 'Parson's coat itself is worth about seven hundred pounds a-year to a good-looking chap like you. You might have married an heiress before you were twenty-seven.'

'But, Harry, that was one of the very reasons why I could not become a parson. I don't believe in a parson marrying.'

'Very pretty sentiment. Heard it before.'

'You're unreasonable to-night, ain't you?'

'Always was; that's why I am here, like you. Good-night.'

CHAPTER III.

‘ ‘Tis better to work than weep.’

ON the day following Innes’s discovery of gold, he and Reid went up to the pool below the little plank-bridge and dragged the dead Chinaman out, and buried him in the bush. They read no service over him, for somehow or other neither of them had regarded a book of Common-Prayer as a necessary article to gold-digging. The Chinaman’s face bore the usual expression of all Celestials. Resignation and joy, malice and generosity were so inextricably intermixed, that it was impossible to ascribe any expression to it at all. After performing this duty, they walked in to the small village of

Vaughan, bought a fresh store of provisions, saw an English newspaper many months old, had something in the shape of a ‘square meal’ at the public-house, *i.e.*, they had some fresh meat, which neither of them had tasted for some time, bought some more tobacco, and returned to the Loddon valley in the evening, literally without a penny between them. Reid had not had one for many a long day. As they walked, Innes said,

‘Plenty of opportunity for being shot in the British Army lately. Did you see in the *Times* what fearful slaughter there has been in the Crimea?’

‘Yes, very nearly enlisted myself, only I was too old, and should have had to lie. Thought the matter over and came to the conclusion that I could get rid of myself more easily here. But since I met you, Dick, I am not in such a hurry to dissolve. Besides, I am a bad character—sacked from school.’

‘ Well, old man, if all men with bad characters are like you, I don’t want to know those with good ones,’ said Innes, and laughed.

Reid wagged his head, and said,

‘ You can trust me, Dick?’

‘ I am sure of that, Harry, if I am sure of nothing else in the world.’

Reid merely said, ‘ Thanks,’ and they strolled on in silence.

Next morning was Sunday, and in consequence a day off. They had had all the feverish excitement over gold knocked out in their previous weary year’s experience. They had too often had small signs which promised greater things, and which had always turned out to be nothing. This time, it is true, the signs were more promising, but they could wait.

On this particular morning Innes awoke very early, and he thought that he heard a sound as though some one were snoring : he looked at Reid, who was sleep-

ing peacefully and breathing as softly as a child. He sat up, and said to himself, ‘ That’s curious. Where the deuce does it come from ? ’

He looked under his own trestle-bed, and under Reid’s. Nothing. He got up and went to the door of the hut, and there in front of it a most extraordinary object met his gaze. Stretched across the front of the door was a figure dressed in the most marvellous collection of rags he had ever seen. One arm supported his head while he slept, and the other was lying negligently by his side. He certainly was asleep, and snorting like a steam-engine. Innes gently kicked this bundle of rags ; a man got up, shook the rags into their places, and stood before Innes. A most astonishing spectacle he was. He was a small, copper-coloured individual, about five feet two in height. He had a very handsome, though pinched, face. He smiled at Innes, and said, ‘ Mornin’, sahib,’ .

and as he spoke he showed a glorious set of pearly teeth. His dress was so utterly outrageous that Innes, after looking at him all over, burst into a roar of laughter. His shirt was made of the very coarsest sacking, literally in shreds ; he wore half a pair of sailors' breeches—I say half a pair advisedly, because one leg only belonged to a sailor's kit : the other half of the pair reached only to the knee, and was made of the remnants of an old patchwork quilt. The discrepancy in length was accentuated by the fact that on the foot of the leg which was only half encased by trouser he wore an enormous Wellington boot, which was dropping to pieces. On the other foot he wore the remains of an old carpet slipper. To crown all, his head was covered by an enormously high hat of the ‘bowler’ species, in the shape of a sugar-loaf. This hat had a mere suspicion of a brim, and was so green with age and exposure to all weathers that it looked as

though it were encrusted with a slight growth of moss.

‘Mornin’, sahib,’ said this wonderful apparition, quite cheerfully; ‘you want a cook?’

This made Innes shout with laughter once more. Reid awoke, popped his head out of the door, and said,

‘Hullo, Dick, what have you got there?’

‘I don’t know, Harry. Just look at him.’

‘Rum fish, certainly. What does he want?’

‘He wants to cook,’ said Innes.

‘Better try next door, our establishment’s complete. The only thing we want is an upper-housemaid, I fancy,’ said Reid, who had been surveying the unfortunate man critically.

All at once, overcome by the supremely ridiculous garb of the man who was all this time grinning away happily, Reid burst into a peal of laughter. Is it not

the immortal Teufelsdröckh who says that no man who has once laughed heartily and wholly can be altogether irreclaimably bad? There can be no doubt that Reid did laugh heartily and wholly, so we draw our conclusion therefrom.

‘But, Harry, we can’t let the poor devil go about in this plight.’

‘No, suppose not; better stay. Suppose he’ll knife us. Steal the gold; deuced little of that at present, though.’ Then, after a swift and comprehensive glance at the man’s face, he added, ‘No, he ain’t a thief. Look at his face, Dick. Honest enough, that.’

‘Where do you come from, my man?’ and as he looked at him again, Innes laughed aloud, and said, ‘Look here, you mustn’t mind my laughing, I can’t help it. You do look so ridiculous.’

‘I come from Goa, sahib.’

‘From Goa? Portuguese?’

‘Father Portuguese, sahib.’

‘Then why do you say “sahib”?’

‘Cook in English army, sahib. Speak Hindustani.’

‘Then how did you come here?’

‘Come out in big ship. Steward man. Many people come look for gold. I come look for gold too. No find any.’

Innes laughed again: for a more helpless-looking wretch than this unfortunate Portuguese he had never seen, and yet the man looked perfectly happy, and was grinning all the time. He had by no means that sorrowful, downcast, down-trodden appearance which so many of the lower-class Portuguese have; they look as though they realized the hopelessness of existence almost as soon as they are out of their childhood. This look of depression is, however, deceptive, for a more incarnate fiend than a Portuguese when he is roused it is hard to find, and they do not think of anything at all, as a rule. Innes turned to Reid, and said in a low voice,

‘What can we do with him? We can’t leave him to wander about in this place. Those infernal Chinese would murder him even for the rags he has on.’

‘Don’t know, I am sure,’ answered Reid. ‘I see you have determined to keep him here.’

‘Well, I don’t see what else is to be done; he may be useful.’

‘Portuguese generally are,’ muttered Reid.

‘Look here. What’s your name, my man?’ said Innes, turning to the bundle of rags.

‘Francisco Velasquez de Mello y Perdomo,’ answered the Portuguese, glibly.

‘Great Cæsar’s ghost, I can’t remember all that. Here, I’ll call you Francis, that’s long enough for any man. You can be my servant—you won’t get any wages, because I haven’t got any to give; but you can live with me, and have clothes. Do you understand?’

‘Yes, sahib.’

‘Well, then, let us see how you can cook. Here is some coffee,’ (they had got it in Vaughan on the previous day, as a change from everlasting black and filthy tea,) ‘flour and bacon. Make breakfast, quick.’

‘Yes, sahib.’

‘And look here, you will have to build up some kind of hut for yourself before to-night—better put it up at the back of this one. There are lots of logs lying about, and an axe and some big nails. Do you see?’

‘Yes, sahib.’

Innes then went into the hut, and found that Reid was laying out some clothes, coarse enough, but clean and more or less watertight, on his bed.

‘Here, Dick,’ he said, ‘these ain’t much too big for the poor beggar. He would be lost in yours.’

By the time that Innes and Reid had washed in the Loddon, breakfast was ready.

Instead of muddy tea, burnt scones, and underdone or burnt bacon, as was usually the case, they found beautiful clear black coffee, light scones, and crisp bacon.

‘By Jove,’ said Innes, ‘the man is a jewel. Isn’t this a nailing good breakfast, Harry?’

‘Tasted worse,’ said Reid, ‘but then I have been my own cook for two years.’

‘Francis, you’re a brick,’ said Innes.

‘Yes, sahib.’

‘Now mind you have your hut built by the time we come home; you had better have a scrub and a wallow in that shallow pool in the river; you will find soap inside; put on those clothes that you will find on the bed there.’

It being Sunday, the two friends went up to the upper claim in which Innes had found the gold on Friday. They sat down, smoked, and looked at it.

‘Looks a likely enough place for “pockets,” Dick,’ said Reid.

‘Yes, I think we’ll get something out of her. If we do, I mean to go in for mining proper. I am sick of this puddling about for alluvial gold. If I get enough money out of her, I am going to move on higher up to Fryer’s Creek and prospect there: I am certain that shaft-sinking would pay there. There are some grand reefs cropping up in various places in that hollow part below the bush.’

‘Yes, I daresay, but we must wait till we get some gold.’

Then they wandered about up the valley, and Innes said,

‘If one only had a little capital, I am sure that farming would pay like fury in this valley. Splendid virgin soil, water at your feet.’

‘Heard a fellow say,’ said Reid, ‘in Vaughan yesterday that an Englishman had taken up some of this land to farm; he is coming on to it in about three months. He has been down here looking at it;

funny thing we didn't see him—funked the Chinese, I suppose. He's gone back to Melbourne to fetch his belongings in the shape of a wife and two children. Had some money to throw away, so thought he might give it a chance here, as well as anywhere else.'

They strolled homewards in the evening, and found the hut as clean as it was possible to make it. Francis was entirely a new being.

'Supper ready, sahib.'

'Salt pig,' grunted Reid; 'he can't make that taste nice, anyhow.'

But he did. This ingenious Portuguese had, in under twelve hours, knocked up a hut for himself,—not particularly watertight, it is true, but still a hut,—cleaned out the other hut, found some yams, mushrooms, and cranberries. He produced the salt pork and yams first, then mushrooms fried in bacon-fat, which, if judiciously used, is as good as butter any day. Then

he served a sort of *compote* of cranberries, and finally black coffee.

It is strange that so comparatively few nations understand the art of cooking. With Frenchmen and some Portuguese it is an inspiration: Englishmen cannot or will not cook: a German's only idea is grease and vinegar, and plenty of them: a Spaniard has literally not the vaguest fag-end of an idea on the subject. Some cooks waste more than they use, and others can make a feast out of apparently nothing. I have eaten a breakfast fit for the gills of a bishop, six thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea, cooked by a Portuguese, who carried all the food, cooking utensils, plates, etc., for four persons, in one hand.

Reid said, 'Best dinner I have ever had in my life. Licks any club *chef* in London into fits. Consider yourself permanently engaged, Francis.'

Francis looked at Innes, and said, 'Yes,

sahib.' He did not seem to pay any attention whatever to Reid, but regarded himself solely as the property of Innes.

On the following day they worked with renewed hope—it had been waning sadly lately. At mid-day Reid strolled up to Innes, whistling, and with a smile on his face. (You can do it if you try, and it looks nicer.)

'That nigger of yours has brought me luck, Dick. I struck a pocket this morning, and got about four ounces, and am going to get more.'

'That's your sort, Harry,' said Innes, with a face of delight; 'I have washed practically nothing this morning, but I can't help thinking the tide has turned.'

They smoked a pipe, and then Reid went down to his claim again, and at night they met and strolled home together. Reid had found more gold and was in a state of jubilation.

'It's a rum thing that the yellow muck

should decide between happiness and unhappiness, Dick, ain't it ?'

' I don't know that it does, old man. It certainly requires a good deal of philosophy to be happy when one is absolutely penniless, and with no prospect in front of one. But I fancy that your man who has a moderate competence, which he has made himself, is as happy or happier than anybody else. You see, he has never tasted the sweets of wealth as you and I have, and a man does not hanker after money much for what it will bring, if he has never been brought up to it. The self-made man usually goes on piling up money in order that his children may cut a dash in the world. Now you and I have been brought up in houses where we had everything we wanted,' (he took it for granted that Reid's people were more or less wealthy, or he would not have been at Eton,) 'and consequently we are somewhat spoilt for a poor man's life. That's why I think our university system

is such a mistake. The majority of men there live at a rate, what with credit and a fair allowance, which nine-tenths of them will never attain to by their own efforts in later life. The consequence is that it takes a man several years to cease kicking against the pricks, when he is launched out into the world to make his own way in life. Take my word for it, Harry, economy in the old world is a deuced hard mistress. Here, in the new, we have no choice. We either starve, or we don't starve, and it depends entirely on our own hard work, and our good or bad luck. There will be no such thing as domestic economy in this island for many a long year to come, not until the mouths begin to get too numerous for the supply of wealth in the country ; then alone will economy begin. There will be vast fortunes made here, and money will be flung about like dirt. People will rush in to pick up the loaves, and no one will take the trouble to bother himself about the crumbs for a time.'

‘By gad, Dick, you have got on the stump this time. Sorry I spoke, if it hurts you in that way. Go on, don’t mind me. Go on.’

Reid’s good fortune of that day had done wonders for him. Innes looked at him in amazement. He was actually jocular. An augury of better days to come.

Reid was by nature a monosyllabic and jerky speaker, and Innes had unconsciously imitated his friend at times.

Francis did not belie the reputation he had established on the previous evening, and they rolled into bed that night, well content with their dawning luck and their servant, in whose good keeping we will leave them for the present.

CHAPTER IV.

The still undiscovered secret of education may be rescued from ancient abuses.

Translation of KANT.

Two years and a half after the events related in the last chapter, that is to say in May of the year 1859, Innes and Reid were standing at the door of their house, no longer a hut, on the hill at Fryer's Creek, watching a most magnificent thunderstorm. They had worked out their claims in the Loddon valley and had found themselves, a year before, the possessors of between four and five thousand pounds. They had then gone prospecting up towards Fryer's Creek, on Innes's suggestion, where he was sure gold was to be found. After an inspection, in which Innes's geo-

logical knowledge helped them considerably, they finally staked out a joint claim, and spent the greater part of their money in buying machinery. Innes's prophecy had proved correct: after boring a shaft, they had struck an exceedingly rich reef, which promised great things, to judge from the specimens which they had got, and from the wonderful yield of the first two or three crushings. When they had finally determined to stay, they set to work to build a small house of five rooms, about a mile and a half away from the mine, which they had called the Black Hawk—for luck, as Reid said—because they had seen a very dark-coloured hawk hovering over the spot, when they first went out prospecting. In this house Francis, no longer in the miscellaneous garb which he had to put up with previously, was established as cook, housemaid, and butler. Very smart he looked as he appeared at the door leading into the

verandah and said, looking at Innes, ‘Dinner ready, sahib.’ He was dressed in white ducks and a white duck jacket, a fine contrast to his copper-coloured face and glossy black hair.

As they turned into the house Innes said,

‘If this rain continues much longer, Harry, there will be a deuce of a flood in the Loddon.’

‘Yes, if to-morrow were Sunday instead of Saturday we might ride over and see it.’

‘That fellow Low, who came there just before we left, will be in a bad way if the river rises very much. I told him that he had built his house too near the river, but he didn’t take any notice of it. I never saw his wife, but he was a gentleman, there was no mistake about that. He has two little girls, too. What a ghastly place to bring children to. The only thing to recommend it is that it is healthy, and I daresay that he will make a pile out of his

farm in time ; he got the land for practically nothing, and they will have the railway down to Castlemaine before we know where we are.'

After dinner they sat in the verandah, and watched the storm till it grew late, and the rain was still coming down as though Jupiter had turned on the tap and being called away to other business, had forgotten to turn it off again.

As they were going to bed, Innes said,
‘ By gad, Harry, it’s a lucky thing we built this little house on the hill instead of in the gully where you wanted it. We should have been swept to blazes by now, if we had been there.’

‘ Yes, I expect there’s a good flood already—wish it would wash away some of the Chinamen,’ said Reid, as they went to bed.

Next day it was as bad as ever. The rain streamed down so persistently that it was impossible to go to the mine, so Innes

devoted his time to writing to his brother, and to various business letters ; Reid remarking, ‘ I would write too, only I have no one to write to ; at least, no one who would care twopence whether they saw my handwriting again or not.’ He devoted himself assiduously to cleaning his gun, which he did with as much care as though it were the finest masterpiece of Purdey, instead of an old double-barrelled muzzle-loader, with barrels so thin that it was a temptation of Providence to use it.

For a man in a new country with nothing to divert his attention when he is not actually engaged in his business, it is a perfect godsend to be able to enter heart and soul into the doing of small, trifling things. Many a man does one hear lament that at school he had never learnt anything useful at all : he had acquired no taste for literature of any sort ; he had never learnt anything of carpentering, or painting, or drawing, or any musical instrument, or

chemistry, or geology, or science in any shape or form ; he had passed his time in very little Latin and less Greek, the rudiments of English History, and little else : had devoted his leisure, like the other boys, to cricket and football and racquets and fives, and he had rolled into bed at night only too ready to sleep. Most boys leave school with but one string to their bow—confidence bred of schoolboy conceit.

Innes, having finished his letters, turned round, and said,

‘ Hillo, Harry, still at the old gun ?’

‘ Yes. It’s as good as doing anything else. I have had no tastes knocked into me, so I am content to pass the time in this way.’

‘ Ah, that comes of our charming system of education in England,’ said Innes. ‘ Education ought to consist chiefly in trying to discover in what direction a boy’s tastes lie, and in training and encouraging him in that direction, so that he may have a

chance of a fair start in the world. The good old crusted, idiotic system which unfortunately still holds among many parents of mapping-out a boy's life at an age when he has never had a chance of judging for himself what he would like to do, has as much to do with the many failures in life as anything else.'

'Don't go on the stump, Dick. It's too wet for speeches,' said Reid, and he yawned.

'I am going to talk whether you listen or not—you know what I mean ; you must have heard this sort of thing dozens of times. "Tom shall go to the Bar, and Harry shall be a doctor, and George shall take orders," is still unhappily very common among a certain class of people. His mother thinks that Harry is cut out for a doctor, since, under the thin pretence of studying anatomy, he has shown such singular pertinacity in decapitating flies and other harmless creatures ; or because, in the pursuit of knowledge, he had immersed

the black kitten in a barrel of quick-lime to see if it would turn white. George, who has as much reverence as a Billingsgate fish-wife, is shovelled into the Church, because—well, you know, there is really nothing else; the army is too expensive, and so on. So it must be. The consequence is that three men, poor devils! are consigned to purgatory in this world to atone for the sins of their fathers. It is a marvel to me how the machine works at all, when one considers the numbers of round men there are in square holes, and *vice versâ*.'

‘Finished, Dick?’ said Reid, as Innes rose and walked out to the verandah.

‘Yes,’ said Innes, over his shoulder.

‘That’s good business,’ said Reid, as he gave a final touch to his gun, and set it up in the corner. He then strolled out on to the verandah, put his arm over Innes’s shoulder, and they both gazed silently at the rain.

It was certainly a lucky thing for Reid (and, as far as that goes, for anyone else who finds himself thrown on his own resources in a new country) that he *could* devote his attention utterly to small things. One has seen a man—a fellow of his college, too—pass an entire afternoon trying to hit a nail on his sitting-room wall with a fives-ball ; he did not succeed, but he was perfectly happy in it. Some men seem to be built in that way ; they seem to be able to allow their brains to go out for a walk for an indefinite period, and then to be able to whistle them home again, all the better for the air. But the great majority of men are not so constituted, and their brains constantly demand food, and go to brooding on subjects which had better be forgotten, when they have no resources to which they can turn their attention. All of which lies at the door of education, or rather the want of it, at school. So thought Innes, at least.

All through that Saturday the rain came down as it only can come down in places like Australia, and when the two men turned into bed at night it looked as though it were going to continue.

CHAPTER V.

'The morn is up again, the dewy morn
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn.'

ON the following morning, when Reid looked out of his window he found the sun shining brightly, and saw only a few fleecy clouds hurrying across the sky. The trees, though still weeping silently, were looking greener and happier for their bath, and the pearly drops on the petals of the passion-flowers on the verandah glistened in the morning sun. He shouted out to Innes,

'Get up, Dick; ride down to the Loddon.'

Innes, from the adjoining room, gave vent to a colossal yawn and rolled out of bed and came into Reid's room.

‘What’s the use of waking a man at this unearthly hour of the day, Harry, on a Sunday, too?’

‘Ride down to the Loddon, while the mud ain’t holding ; horses will come home fast enough, mud or no mud,’ said Reid.

‘Right you are, we’ll start directly after breakfast.’

At seven o’clock they were away splashing through the puddles in the road ; just before reaching Vaughan they had to wade with the water up to their horses’ girths for half-a-mile. From Vaughan they turned sharp off to the left and by a bush-track reached the Loddon valley, and rode right up to their old camping-ground. A magnificent sight met their gaze. The Loddon was one sheet of yellow foam, dashing and hurling along with irresistible force. Here and there was a back-water filled with dirty bubbles and sticks : an occasional rabbit came wheeling down at its last gasp. Anon came a Chinese gold-

washing cradle dipping and spinning alone.

‘ Devilish poor chance a man would have in that, Dick.’

Innes, completely overawed by the sight, did not answer. They stood and watched the insignificant stream suddenly turned into a howling torrent, and congratulated themselves inwardly that they no longer occupied the little log-hut which was now standing, a little to their left, in two feet of water.

‘ Lucky we shifted. This would have been deuced unpleasant,’ said Reid.

‘ Yes,’ said Innes ; ‘ by the way, Harry, I wonder how those people at Low’s are getting on : the water must be very near them by this time, and it is not falling at all yet. Their house was only about forty yards from the bank. Let’s go and see. It is a quarter-of-a-mile up, anyhow.’

Just as he finished speaking, Reid shouted out,

‘ Hallo, what’s that?’ and pointed to a

white mass coming madly down the stream about a hundred yards above them, just at a bend in the river.

‘ My God, it’s a woman,’ said Innes ; ‘ I saw her hair as she rolled round, and she’s alive. Look !’

Reid was off his horse in an instant, and by the time he got to the bank the whitey-brown figure was only about fifteen yards above him, and luckily comparatively near the bank. He waited just one instant to allow it to come the least bit nearer, and then he made a wild plunge into the foaming rush of water. He gave two powerful strokes, and made a grab at the body. He had timed it exactly, and managed to catch hold of one arm as it whirled past him, but in so doing the stream had twisted him round, so that he was now on the outside, in the faster part of the stream. He strained every nerve in his body to make for the shore, but the stream and his burden were too much for him, and he was

hurried down at a terrible pace, and saw that one or both of them must drown. But he had counted without Innes, who, directly he saw that Reid had forestalled him by jumping in, rode down about seventy yards below to a shallow back-water, and stood up to his middle, on the edge of the stream, poising his hunting-crop, which had the lash on, ready. As Reid neared him, some four yards out in the stream, he shouted to him and made a cast with his whip, just as though he were casting for trout. Reid caught the idea at once, and made a grab at the lash and managed to catch hold of it and with a turn of his hand to wind it over his wrist. Innes leaned back and pulled, with the result that the two came slowly round with the stream into the back-water, and Innes hauled them up on to the bank.

‘Narrow squeak,’ said Reid, as he shook himself like a dog.

The whole thing had not taken a full

minute. The two men began immediately to resuscitate the unconscious girl. It did not take long, as it was only in the last half minute or so that she had become unconscious. In ten minutes she opened her eyes and sighed, and in a few minutes more was sitting up thanking her preservers, not knowing which of the two had jumped into the river, but turning instinctively to Innes, who promptly explained that it was Reid who had really saved her: an accusation which Reid denied instantly, saying,

‘No, no, if Dick hadn’t been there with his whip, we should both have been drowned—dead certainty.’

The men were both standing with their hats in their hands, and Innes asked her if she felt strong enough to walk to her home, inquiring at the same time where it was.

‘Oh, I live at Mr. Low’s,’ she answered, in a soft and lady-like voice. ‘I am his

niece, and governess to his children. I only came out three months ago.'

Neither of the men had spoken to a lady for at least three years, and felt a little embarrassed, especially as in their efforts to restore consciousness they had been compelled to open her dress and cut her stays. The lady was perfectly at her ease, and said 'she would be so much obliged if they would walk up as far as Mr. Low's farm with her, as she felt rather dizzy after her ducking.'

She was just going to rise when she suddenly glanced at her dress, and said, 'Oh!' and blushed crimson. Reid mumbled something about catching the horses, and Innes thought he had left his whip on the bank below, though anybody who was not 'high gravel blind' could have seen it dangling from his belt, and they simultaneously disappeared.

In ten minutes they were back again, and escorted her, one on either side, towards the house.

'How did you manage to fall in, Miss—'

'Miss Low,' answered the girl. 'You know Mr. Low had built a wooden foot-bridge over the river: I had been across to the other side, and was returning, and had got about two-thirds of the way across when the bridge gave, and I was swept into the water. Luckily I am a very good swimmer, and I managed to keep my head above water until I saw you two gentlemen on the bank, when I suppose I must have fainted, for I remember no more until I found myself on the bank.'

She blushed again at the recollection, and Innes remarked that she was an exceedingly pretty girl with large, grey eyes, a straight, short nose, and a pretty mouth which was somewhat large.

They walked up to the house without another word being spoken, and as they approached it they saw Mr. Low standing opposite the bridge, eyeing it with a puzzled look. He had evidently just come in

from riding, and had no notion of what had happened. When the party of three very much bedraggled individuals were about fifty yards off he turned and gazed in amazement at them, and walked quickly towards them.

‘Good God, Kate, what has happened?’

Miss Low merely pointed to the bridge, and said, ‘These two gentlemen saved me about a quarter-of-a-mile below,’ and with a bow to each she went quickly into the house.

Mr. Low was a man about fifty years of age, with short, curly grizzled hair, and merry brown eyes, which, however, assumed a serious expression as he said,

‘It is quite impossible to thank you two gentlemen for what you have done; I love my niece almost as well as my own children, and I don’t know what I should have done without her. But you will come in and take some hot brandy-and-water after your ducking?’

They thanked him and followed him, when he turned and said,

‘ By the way, I don’t know your names, though I seem to have seen you before. Mine is Low, as Kate has probably told you.’ They explained that they had left the valley just as he had arrived, and he said, ‘ Ah, I remember ; glad to make your acquaintance. I have heard of you as the only steady men who go in for mining in the whole district, which is certainly a distinction.’

They went into the house and put on some of Mr. Low’s clothes in exchange for their own dripping togs, and Mr. Low produced brandy and hot water ; and as they were sipping it Mrs. Low appeared with two beautiful little girls of twelve and fourteen, who, with unaffected grace, came and shook hands with the two men. Soon after Miss Low, apparently none the worse for her wetting and fright, came in, dressed in a white muslin gown with a blue sash.

She turned to Reid, and said,

‘ I am afraid you must have thought me very rude in not expressing my thanks better than I did, but it is a very hard thing to do, to thank anyone for rendering a service which can never be repaid.’

Reid felt uncomfortable, and murmured that ‘ he ought to have been shot if he had not jumped in to save her.’ Shortly after this they left, with a hearty invitation from Low to come over whenever they had any spare time.

The two men rode well past Vaughan on the homeward road without exchanging a single word. At last Innes said,

‘ I haven’t seen a prettier girl for many a long day.’

‘ Humph,’ grunted Reid, ‘ naturally. You haven’t seen a clean face on a woman for nearly four years.’

‘ You are a matter-of-fact beast, Harry. Did you see her eyes, old man?’

‘ Yes, sort of watery blue.’

'Watery blue!' said Innes, in a tone of utter disgust; 'they are the softest grey eyes I have ever seen, and such an expression!'

'For my part, I never saw any expression in any eyes except in a retriever dog's,' replied Reid.

Innes laughed, and repeated,

'A retriever dog's?'

'Yes, I mean it—if you can show me any eyes that can express every grade of feeling like a retriever's, I'll acknowledge it; but you can't.'

Innes, seeing that discussion was useless, whistled softly to himself.

They were very silent that night, as they smoked their pipes in the verandah. At last Innes got up, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and apparently addressing the passion-flowers on the trellis-work, said,

'Yes, I like a largish mouth, it shows strength; your sweet little mouths usually belong to colourless women. Good-night, Harry.'

Reid sat for some time in deep thought; then he rose from his chair, whispered the solitary word ‘*Damn*’ to the circumambient air, and went to bed.

CHAPTER VI.

‘ἀεὶ ἐν πίπτονσιν οἱ Διὸς κύβοι.’

‘RATHER crusty last night, Harry, weren’t you?’ said Innes at breakfast.

‘Enough to make a man crusty.’

‘What is?’

‘Your folly, of course. Just as I expected: as soon as I find a man, a real man, not one of your putty images with the usual complement of limbs, and a head filled with conceit and sawdust, but a man, he goes and falls in love with a girl, and I suppose he’ll get married,’ grumbled Reid.

‘Pooh! what nonsense you’re talking. Can’t a fellow admire a pretty girl, especially when he hasn’t seen one for such a long time, without your talking directly about his getting married. Suppose even

he did want to marry : did you never think of getting married, eh ?'

' No—o—o !' bellowed Reid. ' Not ag—'

' More fool you. Every honest man ought to get married, if only to knock some of that conceit, which you talk about, and the selfishness out of him. If a man is worth his salt, marriage will make him do more good to himself and to the world in general than he would or could ever do as a bachelor. A man don't begin to live until he is married. What's the good of lolling about in idle ease, doing no good to yourself or to anybody else ?'

' I thought so,' said Reid.

' *What* do you think, you silly old image? What are you wagging your head about for, like a Chinese idol ?'

' Said you were going to marry, and so you are.'

' Who said I was going to marry ?'

' Well, Dick, you implied it, to say the least of it, didn't you ?'

' Of course I intend to marry some day or other. But how the devil am I to know whether I could marry Miss Low, even supposing I wanted to. She probably wouldn't have me, if I were to ask her. She'll want to marry you, Harry, as you saved her.'

' No, I didn't; you pulled us out: besides, I ain't a marrying man. Should beat my wife, take to drink, or murder the children, or something. Tried it once, no go.'

Innes looked at him in amazement. This was literally the first hint he had ever had that Reid had been married. As the end of the week drew nigh, Reid saw that Innes was fidgetty and uneasy, and he chuckled inwardly. On the Friday Innes said, after dinner,

' What a beastly ugly place this is after the Loddon valley.'

' More air here, better situation,' said Reid.

‘Yes, but I think I always prefer living in a pretty place to a healthy one, don’t you?’

Reid burst out laughing, and said,

‘What a humbug you are, Dick. Only a month or two ago you were congratulating yourself on having got out of that muggy ditch.’

This was unfortunately true, so Innes was dumb. In a minute or two Reid added,

‘If you mean, will I ride over and see the Lows on Sunday, I will.’

Innes brightened up, and said,

‘I had thought of suggesting it. I don’t think the horses get enough exercise. Two journeys to the Hawk and back isn’t enough for them.’

‘No,’ ejaculated Reid; and then, ‘Suppose we ride to Chewton or Malmesbury. Longer ride, and we haven’t been there for nearly two years.’

‘Well, Harry, I think the valley is pret-

tier ; and, besides, we told old Low that we would go to see him.'

' All right, Dick.'

On the Sunday they rode over to the Loddon valley, and had a warm welcome. Innes occupied his time in cultivating the society of Miss Low, who, ' simplex munditiis,' looked like a fairy in her soft muslin gown. She was evidently an artist in the matter of dress. Reid cast many a sad glance towards the pair as they strolled along the bank under the trees on the opposite side of the river. Mr. Low found him very poor company, and voted him very uninteresting to his wife that evening.

' Not at all like Innes, who is full of life and spirits.'

This visit was the forerunner of many others, and Innes learned that Miss Low was the daughter of her uncle's elder brother, who had died eighteen months before, having come terribly to grief over speculations on the Stock Exchange : the

result of which was that she, his only daughter, was left practically penniless, and was only too glad to accept her uncle's offer of a home in Australia, as governess to his two little children. Reid did not seem at home with any of the family except the children, who worshipped him. He said such odd things to them in his dry way, and amused them with utterly impossible stories containing no vestige of truth, to such an extent that they regarded him as a genius, and, moreover, as their particular property when he came over to see their parents. As they were sitting under the trees, one of the little girls was saying,

‘ But, Mr. Reid, I am sure the fur of that possum you ate the day before you met Mr. Innes must have been very bad for you.’

‘ Never thought of that, my dear ; would have eaten a live snake, if I couldn't find anything else,’ answered Reid.

‘ Oh, but I couldn’t eat anything nasty, however hungry I was.’

‘ Never been hungry, my dear ; wait till you try forty-eight hours on the tramp without any food, a little fur won’t trouble you much, and black beetles will taste better than mulberries and cream.’

‘ Ugh ! Mr. Reid.’

Towards the end of January, in the following year, as they were riding back from Vaughan one Sunday evening, Reid said, with a sigh,

‘ I suppose you are going to marry her, Dick ?’

‘ Yes, Harry, if she will have me ; and, by Jove, if she won’t, I don’t care much what happens to me. I am the most miserable beggar on the face of the earth, because I am afraid she may say no.’

‘ Bah, she won’t say no, you old fool.’

‘ How do you know ?’ said Innes, eagerly.

‘ Because I have watched her eyes when she has been looking at you.’

‘Then you really think she’ll have me?’

‘Of course she will.’

‘By gad, I think I’ll ride back now;’ and he reined in his horse. ‘If I were only sure, though,’ said he, hesitatingly.

‘Come on, Dick; don’t be an ass. It will keep till next Sunday. At any rate, you may as well have another week of comparative sanity. I know all about it —did it myself once. Come on.’

So they went on; Innes in a brown study, dreaming of the eyes ‘he longed to see,’ and Reid gazing into space with a far-away look in his eyes. At length he heaved a deep sigh, and said,

‘May as well tell you my romance, Dick, though, Lord knows, it’s sad enough. I was married, eight years ago, to a girl whom I thought was an angel out of heaven, and so she was, so she was until —but I must go back to the beginning. I was sacked from Eton for an offence which I had never committed. My father,

a baronet with eight children and not too much money, with the invariable high-toned sense of justice which fathers always display, was pleased to regard me with scorn, and cut me off with a shilling. I got into a merchant's office ; did well. Became secretary to a large Insurance Loan Company, did well, so they said ; good salary, and so on, and enjoying myself in good society. I used to meet at different houses a girl with whom I fell in love, but never dreamt of marrying, because she was a great beauty and an heiress in a small way. Mainwaring her name was. Proposed one day in a hopeless sort of way, and to my amazement was accepted. I loved that girl, Dick, with all the strength of my heart and soul. Got married, and was as happy as a king. Four years of uninterrupted bliss. One night in the beginning of July four years and a half ago, got home to our house in Bolton Gardens, and found a note something to this effect :

“ DEAR HARRY,—I am tired of our hum-drum life, and have eloped with Sir Charles Hawtree. Yours,

“ ANNIE.”

‘ Nothing more. She had shown no signs of boredom or anything, in fact, save supreme content. I suppose it was my fault; and yet I loved her as much as it was possible for any man to love anybody, but I am not a demonstrative man. But why she should go off with one of the biggest blackguards in the whole of London, who probably has cast her off by now, is a mystery. If you tell me that any man understands a woman after that, I shall say that you do not tell the truth. Nobody does. They don’t understand themselves. The lightest wind that blows can send them flying off in one direction, to be drawn back post-haste by the next breeze that blows in the opposite direction. They are all whims and fancies, and un-

reasonableness. Yet I suppose it was my fault. Fate, hell in this world instead of the next, it doesn't matter what you call it, it's all the same. If I had not met you, Dick, I think I should have hated all my fellow-creatures for ever. Well, well—I got a divorce, no defence. I threw up my post and came out here. There were no children. Rum world; retribution for wasted opportunities in my youth, I suppose. I have a great belief in a balance being kept, compensation in this world as well as the next. Heigh-ho! it ain't no use crying over spilt milk, anyhow. Every dog has his day. I have had mine.'

He ceased; and Innes, looking at him, saw that through all his cynicism he was deeply affected, so he did not speak a word, but merely leaned over his horse and stretched out his hand to Reid, who gripped it, and turned his head away in the other direction for some time. When he turned round again, Innes saw that

tears stood in his eyes ; but he said, in quite a jovial tone,

‘ Nice sort of fellow I am, Dick, to encourage a man who is thinking of getting married. Look here, old man, I have watched that girl, and as far as any man *can* judge of a woman’s feelings, she would die for you. Don’t mind what I have said. Go in and win, and I hope you will draw a better ticket than I did.’

What Reid had said served to make Innes determine to ride over the very next day and propose to Miss Low ; but somehow or other, when the morning came, his courage had oozed away, and he could not make up his mind. So each day of the week passed. At night he made up his mind regularly to go, and in the morning he as regularly ‘ cut ’ it. Good resolutions are the children of the night. Their constitutions are delicate, and cannot bear the strong glare of sunlight, and one

cannot help thinking that there must be considerable room for a protracted walk on the curbstones in hell, if, as they say, it is paved with good resolutions. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Innes's resolutions oozed away in the morning as readily as they had been formed at night, until on Sunday morning he actually suggested that they should ride to Malmesbury instead of to the Loddon.

'Bosh,' said Reid. 'I have been making up stories all the week to tell Annie Low, and I can't remember them for another week.'

So they went, Innes in a horrible state of nervousness. Reid was enjoying his embarrassment, and regaled him with all sorts of stories of how women had drawn men on simply in order to laugh at them, and other interesting details calculated to make a man confident. However, they got there finally, and Reid put the finishing touch on Innes's nervousness as they

were going in at the porch of the house by saying,

‘Dick, you’ve got a huge splash of mud on your cheek.’

Innes just had time to ask where, when a sweet voice from within cried, ‘Come in, we are expecting you,’ and at the same time the door, which had been ajar, was pushed open and Miss Low appeared, looking as beautiful as the day.

In the afternoon Reid was sitting on a log beside the river, with one little girl on his knee, and the other reclining at his feet. He was telling them some wonderful tale, and they were gazing at him with looks of awe and admiration, when, on looking up, he saw Innes striding jauntily along the bank, with his chest out and a general air of satisfaction, which betokened conquest. Reid sighed and finished his tale. Annie Low was saying,

‘Well, Mr. Reid, you ought to stop smoking too, because you might colour

like a pipe, and become just like that friend of yours.'

'Did he colour *quite* black, Mr. Reid?' said the younger girl, with wide-open eyes and an expression of intense interest.

'Black as a nigger up to his nose, brown above that. Hair looked like the tobacco on top.'

'Dear me, what funny friends you have, Mr. Reid,' said Annie.

By this time Innes had reached the group. Reid told the little girls to run into the house, and sat moodily on his log.

'Harry, I am going to be married,' said Innes.

'I told you so three months ago.'

'Well, haven't you anything to say?'

'No.' Then, after a pause, 'Why should I? Don't believe in it. Besides, what's to become of me? Only friend I ever had.'

'But, Harry, you can live with us.'

'No, that won't do, shall dig by myself. I'm not a sociable animal.' Then he sud-

denly rose from his seat, and, grasping Innes's hand, said, ' Of course I congratulate you with all my heart, Dick. I am a selfish beast. Hope that your married life will be as great a success as mine was a failure. There are heaps of good women in the world, though, by gad, I have not struck 'em.'

Then they turned and strolled back to the house. The Lows, sorry though they were to lose their niece, were equally glad that she should marry a man they liked so much as Innes.

Reid did his best to show Innes that he was glad at what had happened, but that night, before they went to bed, he said,

' It's no use, Dick, I can't help it. Do you know you are the best man I ever met in my life, and I had made up my mind that we should jog along here as happy as possible, though I was always fighting against the thought that you might marry ; and now it has come, and I suppose I must

go back again to my old life of indifference and despair. Selfish—of course it's selfish. All men are selfish, and always will be.'

There was no need for any delay in the marriage, and in three months from that time Reid was standing on the steps of the hotel in Castlemaine, watching a carriage disappear along the road. He waved his hand in response to a handkerchief fluttering from the carriage, and there was something very like tears in his eyes as he turned with a sigh into the hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

'I saw fair Childhood hard at play,
Upon a bank of blushing flowers ;
Happy—he knew not whence or how ;
And smiling, who could choose but love him ?
For not more glad than Childhood's brow
Was the blue heaven that beamed above him.'

THREE weeks afterwards, Innes and his wife were established in their house, which Innes had called Blairavon, after his old home in Scotland. Three rooms had been added some two months before. Reid had resolutely refused to occupy a room, which was placed at his disposal, and Francis had as resolutely refused to leave. It had been arranged that Francis should go to Reid when Innes was married, as he was a perfect servant for a bachelor. So it came about that Francis was told to prepare to

change his home and go to live with Reid, in a small house about three-quarters-of-a-mile to the left of Innes's own house, at the very edge of the bush. On being told this, Francis remarked,

‘I no go, sahib. I stay here with you.’

‘But you must go. Mr. Reid hasn’t got any servant, and it is almost impossible to get one.’

‘Ve’ sorry, sahib; I no go.’

‘Confound it. I insist upon your going. I give you notice to leave in a week.’

‘Ve’ good, sahib, I go look for gold again. If I no stay with you, I no stay with nobody.’

After this it was hopeless—so Francis stayed on, and Reid was the loser thereby. In October of the following year a son was born to Mrs. Innes, who was called Douglas. A year or two later, Innes was returned for Castlemaine to the Legislative Assembly, in the Conservative interest, by a majority of ten votes only. This narrow majority,

he was assured by a Roman Catholic priest, was only secured by his own personal efforts. He and three of his colleagues had unblushingly made some miners drunk, and brought them up triumphantly to vote for Innes.

‘ Begorra,’ he said, ‘ I rode the tails aff three horses mesilf scrapin’ up votes for ye, although ye are a heretic—bad cess to ye ! I voted five times mesilf in different places too,’ (the register was not kept very strictly in those days,) ‘ but I couldn’t bear that this enloighted part of the world should be riprisinted by anybody but a gintleman.’

Richard soon made a name in the House, and he might have been M.L.C., and might have held the seals of office on two or three occasions, even become Prime Minister in time, had he not become thoroughly disgusted with the byeways of colonial politics and politicians. After five years of it, he gave it up in despair. The French

Chamber of Deputies of the present day was a joke to it (I am talking of thirty years ago, as I believe the Victorian Parliament of the present day to be as equally well conducted as—well, say our own House of Commons).

In January of the year 1863 there came into the world a young gentleman of whom we shall see a great deal. This young gentleman, who was called Allan, was much like other young gentlemen of the same age. He howled and kicked and showed various other signs of a sound constitution and impotent fury common in infants. He was pronounced a healthy child and strong of his years, (this was when he was ten days old,) and had the same amount of worship bestowed upon his innocent person as the majority of children have. (It is hard that this worship invariably comes at a time when one cannot appreciate it. Now, if it only came at the age of—thirty-five say, it would be

much more pleasant.) He took this worship as a matter of course, though he was not conceited about it. In due time he was christened, an operation for which he expressed his complete disapprobation. He came through the operation (or is it a stage?) of teething without any disastrous results—his temper certainly did not improve at this time, it is true, but then even a grown man does not behave with any reasonable degree of equanimity when teeth become fractious. At the age of five he was discovered having dinner with a converted Chinee. He had evidently been trying to eat after the fashion of the Celestials, for in his hands he had a pair of chopsticks, and his blouse was a mass of rice; moreover he had a hungry look in his eyes. The Chinaman, intent on personal stoking, was too much engaged in that occupation to notice the efforts of Allan. It certainly showed courage worthy of a better cause to attempt rice with

chopsticks at the age of five. Many people have considerable difficulty in conveying their food to their mouths with a knife and fork in a decent and becoming manner,—but with chopsticks !

It was either in this year or the following one, that he was discovered playing with a tame kangaroo which was anchored to a tree in a paddock behind the stables. This kangaroo was so tame that its food had to be hurled at it from a distance, as no one had ever previously dared to venture within the radius of its chain. Allan was discovered sitting within two feet of the animal, apparently telling it a story, to which the kangaroo, with its head on one side, was listening with admiration. Food of the most tempting kind was immediately brought and thrown to the other side of the tree, and the kangaroo was lured away, not without first casting up in his mind whether an object so entirely new and interesting as Allan was not more to be de-

sired than food. The lower nature of the animal prevailed, however, and Allan was rescued and promptly beaten by his nurse-maid, who, on the two occasions above referred to, had been engaged in flirting with a decrepit, toothless old woodcutter, there being no soldiers, nor in fact any other male being handy. When he was seven years old he had been brought in from a large pond at the end of the same paddock, apparently drowned ; but, after an hour's unconsciousness, he came to life again—after which the nurse-maid was dismissed, and, for her sins, shortly afterwards married a drunken miner. Allan is rather hazy about this episode in his life, because he says that, in their joy at his resuscitation, they gave him so much brandy that he had a headache for a week. After this he managed to pull through without any further serious mishap. There had been born besides a daughter called Amy, and another son who was known as Jack—his

real name was Donald, but he did not even discover this fact himself until he was nearly twelve years old.

During all these years, Innes and Reid had been making great sums of money out of the Black Hawk, and Innes was getting anxious to go home, especially as he had from time to time heard that his brother Alistair was going downhill very fast ; but his wife had always dissuaded him, saying that the success of the Black Hawk and the other mines depended so much on his presence and direction. All of which Innes said was nonsense. He had said,

‘ But, my dear Kate, there is a mine, and gold in it, and people to work it—it is as easy for one man to fish it out as another.’

Innes had become a great power in the district about Castlemaine, and, owing to the fact that, in his capacity as Justice of the Peace, he had been instrumental in getting various Chinamen sentenced to

death or penal servitude for sheep-stealing, murder, and general pilfering, (Justice was summary in those days,) among that class of men there was no doubt that he was very unpopular, and there had not been signs wanting that the disaffected Chinamen would go to any length to get rid of him, if opportunity offered.

On this account alone, Mrs. Innes would have been glad enough to move from Fryerstown, but she could not reconcile herself in any way to leaving Australia. The last scenes of her home-life in England had been so depressing that she had conceived a very natural dislike to a country which had treated her so unkindly. She had said fondly to her husband,

‘ I don’t know why I am so fond of Australia, Dick ; I think it must be because I found you here.’

CHAPTER VIII.

‘Fixt eyes of painted ancestors,
Staring for ever from their gilded walls.’

THE old home which Innes longed so intensely to see again, stands on the right bank of the Girvan water, about five miles from the village of the same name. Since his father’s death, it had been occupied by his brother Alistair. It is needless to enlarge upon the antiquity of the race of Innes. Suffice it to say that their pedigree dated as far back as that of Sir Anthony Crabtree, only it had the advantage of being more authentic. It is true they had no letter written in Noah’s handwriting, as the Crabtrees had, still they might have had one, had they chosen.

From the lodge facing the Girvan road one drives along a beautifully-wooded avenue for nearly a mile, until suddenly, round a curve in the road, the castle of Blairavon appears. From this point of view, backed as it is by a dense mass of trees, the house has a most imposing appearance, but gives one rather the idea of solidity and comfort than of beauty. To the right of the house there is wood again, dipping gradually down some hundred feet to the level of the river, which meanders peacefully along half-a-mile away.

The house itself had obviously, at one time, been much smaller. Two wings had been added in the same style as, but at a much later date, than the main part of the house: the white freestone of the wings showing up sharp and clear against the weather-stained coat of its more aged brother. A flight of stone steps leads up to the hall-door, inside which is the entrance-hall, filled with stags' heads and

other trophies. Through this outer hall one goes into a circular second hall, which is really the well of the staircase. The staircase is spiral, and coils right up to the attics. This inner hall is lit by a large skylight, since, when the inner door is shut, no light can enter. If you are not particular about getting a crick in your neck, you can see, marked on the skylight above, the identical star made on the outer glass (the skylight is double) by a drunken chimney-sweep, who fell on it some hundred years before, while he was trying to sweep a chimney, sing the 'Flowers of the Forest,' and drink some real Glenbogie, all at the same time. The chimney and the song suffered in the interests of whisky, and he went to sleep where he fell, and was with difficulty persuaded to leave his dangerous bed, saying that he liked the air up there. Being the only capable sweep in that part of the country at the time, he could not be dis-

pensed with, so in future he was lashed to the parapet.

Down this inner hall one walked straight through into the drawing-room, which led into the library, and that again into the dining-room: consequently, all the front of the house was practically one room, since the folding-doors were rarely shut, so one had not the trouble of going down passages, and opening and shutting doors in order to find anybody else. A flight of broad, stone steps led down from the drawing-room on to the lawn, which, studded with trees, sloped gradually down to the river below. From the drawing-room windows one had a beautiful view over the trees towards the Barr hill, where part of the Blairavon shooting lay. To the right just a glimpse of the chimney-tops of the village of Blairavon, the sleepiest little village in the world. To the left the turrets of Kilwherry, the seat of the late Sir George Rawlinson, who had just died

without direct heir, and the succession to whose estates was causing endless litigation.

The old home of the race, situated close down by the river, had long ago fallen into ruins. Of the two new wings, the west wing was entirely finished and furnished ; while in the east wing the dining-room was the only room furnished. This was a magnificent room, stretching almost along the entire length of the ground-floor of the wing. It was panelled with bog-oak, and all round the lofty walls hung the portraits of the warriors, statesmen, judges, fox-hunters, port-drinkers, and fair ladies of the Inneses of bygone days. The rest of the east wing was in an entirely unfinished condition. The windows and floors were there, it is true, and many a dance in later days was held, *sub rosâ*, by the younger spirits in these deserted rooms.

Alistair had lived in this vast house absolutely alone since his father's death. About a year before the events related at

the end of the last chapter, he was sitting in the huge dining-room with a cup of coffee in front of him, and a decanter of brandy at his elbow. It was half-past eight in the evening, and he had just finished dinner. He sat huddled up in his chair, and his watery eyes gazed vacantly into space. His hair, which was prematurely white, was long and dank, and hung in ragged strips about his neck. With a shaking hand he poured out nearly half a tumbler of brandy, and drank it off at a gulp. Then he shuddered, and put the decanter farther away and eyed it with a look of hatred. Just then the butler came in, and handed him a letter. A weak smile spread over his face as he saw the address.

‘From Dick,’ he muttered, ‘dear old Dick!’ And, with a groan, he said, ‘Oh, Dick, Dick, why aren’t you here, to save me from this?’ and, as he said it, he dashed the decanter of brandy off the table, and it smashed into a thousand pieces on the floor.

'Did you ring, sir?' said the butler, appearing at the door again.

'No,' said Alistair, and pointed to the broken glass lying on the carpet.

The butler swept it up, and Alistair sank into an arm-chair near the fire, and opened and read his brother's letter. He sighed and said to himself,

'Lucky Dick!'

About fifteen years before, he had thought that he was going to marry the daughter of his neighbour, Lord Dunure. There had been a tacit understanding between Lady Grizel Ogilvie and himself for a long time, and he had only waited until he could get the estate into something like order before asking her to be his wife. Suddenly, without any warning, the Marquis of Somerton, a weak-kneed, worn-out young *roué*, had come to stay with the Dunures, and had carried off the prize which Alistair had regarded as his own. He was completely dazed for a time. He knew that she had

loved him, and he would have sacrificed his own life willingly for her. He had not taken a scheming mother into consideration. The deed was done, and he was left alone in his own huge house to sit and curse the Fates, and mourn in silence over the cup of happiness that had been so suddenly and unexpectedly dashed from his lips. He was alone, and he began to seek consolation in the lonely man's worst enemy: he began to drink in secret to drown his sorrow, and, almost before he knew it, the demon had gripped him so tightly that he could not shake him off; and now, after fifteen years of misery, he was a trembling, decrepit old man at the age of forty-two.

After reading his letter, he dozed in the arm-chair; and then, after a time, he got up and wandered aimlessly about the room. He stopped in front of the fireplace and looked up at the coat-of-arms, carved in oak, which stood above. The wood had

warped, with the result that a large crack ran right down the middle of the coat. Alistair gazed for a time, and then muttered ‘Fuimus.’ This was the motto carved underneath the coat-of-arms. He then pursued his aimless course round the room, stopping in front of a portrait now and then and apostrophizing it. He saw the faces of many beautiful women and strong men. Here a courtier of the Virgin Queen ; here a cavalier who had fought and died for Prince Charlie. On one side of the fireplace a powdered, patched, and bewigged lady whose reputation had been no better than it ought to have been ; on the other the portrait of a jolly, red-cheeked, red-nosed old Lord of the Court of Session, who looked as though the heaviest sentence he would inflict would be to a gallon of ale and a rousing supper. Finally he stopped in front of his father’s portrait, at which he gazed long and as steadily as he could. What he saw was a handsome,

hard-featured man, with fine, fierce eyes and a cruel, sensual mouth, an expression which betokened severity and selfishness, and yet the artist had not maligned him. After some minutes, Alistair gave vent to a short, hard laugh, and went over to the fire again. He put one foot on to the fender, and leaned his head against his hand, which he had placed against the mantelpiece. In this position he stayed for some time, and then he began to mutter to himself, as though he were thinking aloud,

‘Here’s a man’ (addressing the fire-irons apparently) ‘who squanders away a fine estate——’ and then he stopped, with a start and a foolish sort of laugh, and said, quite loud, ‘Well, perhaps it isn’t fair to judge one’s own father; he has already answered a mightier judge,’ and he slipped with a sigh into the arm-chair once more.

As he sat there he began to think of what his own life might have been had he had the desire of his heart fifteen years

before ; and, as he thought, he ground his teeth together, then suddenly leaped up and rang the bell impatiently.

‘ Brandy,’ said he, to the butler ; ‘ and, when you have brought it, you can lock up and go to bed—do you hear ?’

‘ Yes, sir.’

Two hours afterwards a shaking, tottering figure was feeling its way out of the dining-room. He steadied himself by the walls and chairs till he reached the stairs, when he stumbled and fell, and lay like a log till found by the housemaid in the morning.

CHAPTER IX.

' Fill the cup and fill the can,
Have a rouse before the morn ;
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.'

ONE very hot afternoon in the beginning of the summer of 1874, Mrs. Innes was sitting in a low lounge-chair on the verandah of the Australian Blairavon, lazily pretending to add up some household accounts. The house stood away from the town, but being on a hill one could, as it were, overlook it. The town itself was not a particularly interesting place: it consisted mainly of one long street, with the usual accompaniment of stores and public-houses. These latter were lively enough at times, and knives, pistols, and

other instruments of utility and destruction with which the miners were wont to enforce an argument, were no strangers. A miner in those days, and probably now too, could drink ‘square’ with a Welsh coal-heaver, or even give him points for that matter, and when the liquor was in him there was the devil to pay. There was a Masonic Hall in the place, which was used by the Freemasons, Odd-fellows, Good Templars, the Temperance Society, (a most necessary institution, whose membership, however, hardly corresponded with the excellence of its aim, since it at that time consisted of the English Church clergyman and one converted Chinee, who preferred opium to whisky). The minister of the Presbyterian church was not a member, nor was he indeed a teetotaller. Balls were also held in the Masonic Hall, to which squatters would come from far and near, only too glad of an excuse and an opportunity of seeing their fellow men.

No one was *blasé* in Australia in those days. They have changed all that now.

As Mrs. Innes sat in the verandah, pretending to add up her accounts, she heard a clatter of hoofs, and, looking up, saw a horseman in a cloud of dust, riding furiously up the hill. As he turned in at the white gates, she saw that it was her husband.

'What can Dick be in such a hurry about?' she thought.

She looked up lovingly at her husband as he came striding into the verandah, and said,

'Oh, Dick, how hot you look! why have you been riding at such a furious pace?'

'Well, dear, I sent up to the post-office to see if there were any letters for you by the English mail which arrived two days ago, and this was given to me. The contents so shocked me that I hurried home to let you see the letter.'

He handed her a very legal-looking document, which ran thus :

‘ 713, Charlotte Street, Edinburgh.

‘ SIR,

‘ I have to inform you that your brother, Alistair, died suddenly at his residence, Blairavon, in Ayrshire, on the 15th of July. You are aware, doubtless, that he was unmarried, and that the estate descends in consequence to you. We should be glad to know whether you intend to occupy the house yourself, or whether you desire it to be let. In the latter case we should be glad to act for you in the matter, having been men of business for your brother, your father, and your grandfather.

‘ We are, Sir,

‘ Your obedient servants,

‘ DOIG AND MCKINLEY, W.S.’

After reading the letter, Mrs. Innes looked up inquiringly at her husband, who, however, did not speak.

‘ Well, Dick?’

‘ Well, dear?’ and then they looked at one another, and smiled.

‘ I am well aware what you are thinking of, Dick. You are making up your mind to go back to Scotland, and you are also thinking that I will resist.’

‘ Exactly, my love. Poor old Alistair! I am afraid his lot was not cast in very pleasant places, yet his life might have been very different. You know he never married, Kate?’

‘ Yes, Dick, you told me so, and the letter says so too; but you never told me why.’

‘ Well, it is a sad story, and one I don’t care much about recalling, but I will tell you all about it some day, now that he is dead. His heart was broken. I must answer Doig’s letter, by the way, but we must talk over the matter carefully first, and do nothing in a hurry, although I long to see the old place again.’

‘ Let us go into luncheon now, at any rate. Francis told me it was ready before you rode up.’

Just inside the dining-room, Francis was standing. When he saw his mistress he merely ejaculated, ‘Soup cold, missee,’ and proceeded to take the cover off.

‘Give your mistress some claret, Francis, and then you may go.’

‘No claret, sahib.’

‘No claret! What do you mean?’

‘No key cellar, Mas’r Duggles, sahib. Throw him down well—no find; make bucket go all morning, spoil clothes.’

Innes noticed, for the first time, that Francis was not dressed in the clothes he ordinarily wore in the daytime, but in the usual butler evening-dress.

‘Why didn’t you tell your mistress?’

‘Mas’r Duggles, he say, “Francis, missis not well to-day—don’t boddher her ‘bout dat key; I tell dad when he come home.” Dat boy de debbil, sahib,—no, I no say dat, dat come himself.’

‘I don’t want any comments on Master Douglas; where is he?’

‘Gone out look for dem ringtail ‘possums up Dead Man Hollow.’

‘Humph! Is there no wine then?’

‘Yes, sahib. Sherry left from dinner last night.’

‘Bring some. You will have to put up with it, Kate, I am afraid; you look pale and tired, dear. I think Douglas was right in that, after all. I wish he had not such a violent temper: I am sure this arose from some outburst or other—probably provoked by that sphinx, Francis. However, we shall know all about it when he comes home this afternoon.’

‘I wish you would not let him go out into the bush so much alone, Dick.’

‘I can’t say I care for it much, but I am afraid it is very slow for him, when Allan is away. But it is a dangerous place, and, although he is careful enough, I think I must stop it.’

They rose from the table, and Innes, putting his arm round his wife’s waist, led

her out into the verandah. Mrs. Innes sat down in the chair she had occupied before luncheon, and her husband drew one like it to her side, and lit a cigar. Neither spoke for a long time, when Richard murmured, ‘Poor old Alistair !’ and sighed. His wife put out her hand, and, taking one of her husband’s, said,

‘Dick, dear, don’t go home. I know that, if you do, you will only fret at not seeing your old home as you knew it. What more can you want than you have here now? A peaceful, pretty home ; a perfect climate, and plenty of money ; and work to do which you could not get at home. I know that you will eat your heart out there at not having anything to do ; you know better than I do that there is no more discontented person in the world than an idle man. Don’t go, Dick ; please don’t go. You can let the house, or even allow your old uncle, General Ainslie, whom you are so fond of, have the use of

it. I have a foreboding that we shall be unlucky if we leave this place where we have been so happy. You know I don't trust Mr. Reid.'

' What nonsense, Kate. If I do go home, I don't intend to be an idle man. I certainly intend to stand for the county, and I daresay my experience in the Legislative Assembly here will be of some service to me, though I should be sorry to compare the English House of Commons with the loud-voiced ribaldry one was accustomed to in Melbourne.'

' Well, Dick, there is one thing which I must say is in favour of England, and that is, education for the children. I should be very sorry if Douglas, Allan, and Jack had to be educated here. I wonder if it is the climate, or merely the lower tone of the majority of the people, which makes the average young Australian so intensely disagreeable. I often fancy that I can even detect that their very faces are of a

lower type than those of their fathers and mothers. But I suppose I am merely prejudiced against the sons of the *nouveaux riches*, who appear to fancy that the world in general, and Australia in particular, was made for their own private benefit.'

Innes laughed, and said,

' Ah, Kate, your standard of merit is much too high. I am afraid your ideas of Englishmen in England are rather highly coloured, owing to your long absence from home. Now, dear, I must ride over to the Black Hawk. I shall be back by six.'

He shouted down the passage, ' Francis, tell Pat to saddle Trojan.'

' Yes, sahib,' answered the sphinx ; and in a few minutes Innes was riding along in the direction of one of his gold-mines.

But he never got there. He had to ride through a corner of the bush to reach the Black Hawk, and, just as he entered it, he met two of his miners carrying something,

and as they neared him he saw that that 'something' was his son Douglas.

'What's the matter, Tregea?'

The man addressed took off his hat, and said,

'I am afraid he be dead, zur. We found him lying up agin a old log, with a young ring-tail in one hand, and the other hand was lying by his side; and do you see this here, sir?' and he pointed to the wrist of the boy's right arm, which was discoloured.

Innes knew the mark only too well. The boy had evidently put his hand into an old rotten stump, round which he had seen some young opossums playing, and thereby disturbed a snake which had been taking an afternoon nap, and which resented being awakened.

Innes was completely stunned by the sight. He turned his horse's head, and said to the men, 'Give him to me.' He placed his dead child in front of him, and rode slowly homewards. As he rode, the

great hot tears fell from his cheeks, and splashed on to the upturned face of his dead son, whom he had loved so dearly. He reached the house by the back way, and so arrived at the stables first. He sent a groom to find out where his wife was. He was told that she was down in the village, so he carried his son into the house, and put him on his bed, and sat down beside the bed to await his wife's return.

Francis, probably overcome with remorse at the recollection of some exceedingly unpleasant remarks which he had made to Douglas in the morning, was filled with undisguised sorrow when he heard of what had happened. As his master carried Douglas into the house, Francis came quite close up and looked at the dead, calm face, and whispered to it,

‘Mas’r Duggles, I only pretend to be angry ‘bout dat key. You forgive old Francis in Heaven!’

The task of breaking the news to his wife was a terrible one for Innes ; but it was better that he should tell her than that it should be suddenly blurted out to her, so he changed his mind, and, instead of awaiting her return, he walked slowly down towards the village. As he met her, he betrayed by the sorrow in his eyes that something terrible had happened. Mrs. Innes saw it immediately, and said,

‘ Dick dear, what is it ? Something has happened.’

Innes tried to speak, but no words came. They walked on in silence until they came to the gates leading into the grounds, and then he told her as gently as he could of the terrible blow that had befallen them.

A mother’s grief is sacred. Douglas had been her favourite son, more especially as he was her first-born, and delicate : it was for this reason that he was not at school. It is a curious thing that mothers

always seem to have a particular leaning towards their delicate children.

For two entire days she lay as though in a trance. She did not weep. Her tears were yet to come. Douglas was buried, and, a week afterwards, Mrs. Innes gave birth to a daughter prematurely, who fought for life for two days in vain. The feeble thread snapped.

Three weeks afterwards, Mrs. Innes was sitting in the verandah, in the cool, summer evening. Her husband came softly up to her, stooped, and kissed her pale cheek : as he did so, she turned to him, and said, quietly,

‘ Dick, dear, I think we had better go to England now.’

CHAPTER X.

'Land of my sires ! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand.'

OUR young friend Allan was at this time at school at Kyneton, under a man who had tried Law in England, found it interesting, but not lucrative. So he came to dig for gold: this was better fun, and moreover it was paying him. He gave it up in a hurry, however. He got shot one day through both cheeks, and swallowed most of his teeth, and was robbed of all his gold. Three men were hanged for it. It was exceedingly doubtful whether they had had anything to do with the matter, but if they had not, they might have had, so they were strung up. (Justice was

summary in those days in Victoria. ‘Somebody has committed a crime, somebody must be hanged,’ was the argument. It did not matter much who—they were all much of a muchness at that time.) After this, Allan’s master exchanged the pick for the black gown once more, preferring life with a competence to death with a possible fortune left behind for somebody else, certainly not the rightful owner, to enjoy. Allan had already been two years at school, and had had a pretty good time of it, always getting into hot water and hopping out again with a smile on his face. It was with feelings of amazement not unmixed with fear that he got a telegram towards the end of November bidding him come home at once. The announcement that he was to go to Scotland somewhat deadened the grief he felt at the death of his brother, of whom he had been passionately fond. He was now nearly twelve years old, and very pleasant to look upon;

he had bright soft grey eyes and curly brown hair, a look as frank and honest as the day, and a smile for anybody.

The preparations for departure occupied nearly two months, and this too served to make Mrs. Innes forget her troubles. Reid was very gloomy during all this time, and only found consolation in Allan, with whom he was an immense favourite. He could make whistles in the most marvellous manner, and there never was such a man at invention of stories, and his powers did not apparently decrease with age ; still he mooned about the place disconsolately, and could not settle to anything. It had been arranged that Innes should retain his shares in the mines, and that Reid should look after his interests and remit funds to England : Reid had full power to act for Innes in every way : this must be remembered.

One night, after they had made their final calculations and arrangements, Innes

looked up from the paper he had been writing on, with a sigh of relief, and said,

‘I don’t think our partnership has turned out so badly, after all, Harry. So far as I can see’ (looking down at the paper), ‘we ought to divide about ten thousand a-year, and I have saved a little over twenty thousand. Better than starving in the Loddon—eh, Harry?’

‘Don’t talk about partnerships, Dick. It’s all you. Some men are born to luck: I should have been rotting in my grave now, if it had not been for you.’

‘Fiddlesticks! men who work like you must succeed.’

‘It ain’t bosh. Tell you that some men are born to misfortune, and work how they may, they can’t get over it.’

‘Well, of course, old boy, if you have made up your mind to it, there’s no use arguing the matter.’

‘Take our two cases, Dick. You, married, rich, happy, after a glorious life at

school and Oxford, going back to the home of your childhood, the land that you, like anyone who isn't a heathen, love more than any other on earth. Look at me : divorced, rich, unhappy, sacked from school for another's fault, deceived by a woman, condemned to Australia for the rest of my life, losing the only friend I ever cared if I saw again.'

'But, my dear Harry, you needn't be condemned to Australia all your life. You can come home whenever you like.'

'Thanks, had enough of England ;' then he turned round and looked steadily at Innes, and said, ' If you ever thank God for anything, Dick, go on your knees and thank Him for having allowed you to meet and marry a good woman : if I hadn't met your wife, I should have gone to my grave hating the whole sex. If it weren't for your interest in these mines, I shouldn't care one rap if I died to-morrow. I was pretty reckless when I met you, but you

gave me a new existence, and now it's over.'

Innes was silent for a long time: his departure, now so near, had made Reid garrulous, and he had talked more in the last two months than in the whole of their previous association. At last Innes turned round and, never even hinting at Reid's last speech, said,

' Well, Harry, you will take Francis now, won't you ?'

' Certainly, if he will come. I very much doubt if he will. He's your old man of the sea.—See what comes of a disinterested action.'

' We'll see, at any rate.'

Reid's surmise was perfectly correct. Francis was told, for the second time, that he must go and act as Reid's servant. He merely said,

' No, sahib.'

' But you can't come to Scotland; you will die of the cold.'

‘Yes, sahib. I die of cold, but I come with you.’

‘Well, Francis, it comes to this: I am not going to take you. Your mistress says you will never get on with the other men, and, besides, you are getting old; oughtn’t you to go back to Goa?’

‘Why I go back to Goa? No want to see anyone there. I come to England with you.’

‘But I won’t take you.’

‘Very well, sahib. I come as steward boy, or sailor-man in same ship.’

Innes gave a shrug of despair, and left him. Personally, he had no objection whatever to Francis coming to Scotland, for he was an excellent man in every way, and a better servant than any Englishman. But Mrs. Innes said that he would not do in England, and must stay in Australia. He told his wife that Francis insisted on coming, and she said,

‘Then I suppose he must come, Dick,

but I know exactly what will happen. There will be constant squabbles between him and the other men, and he will make love to the maids. Although he is nearly fifty, you know well how susceptible he is.'

'I am afraid there is no way out of it, Kate. If we don't take him, he will take us, so we may as well submit with the best grace possible.'

Reid had said previously to Innes,

'If this sort of thing were to occur in an Englishman, I should say it was merely premonitory symptoms of lunacy; but your lower-class Portuguese has that sort of dog-like fidelity, when once he becomes attached to anybody, which cannot deceive.'

So it was decided that Francis should come, and, when Innes told him that it had been settled and that he had better pack up his clothes, he answered,

'Yes, sahib, I all ready a week ago.'

Which was perfectly true. He had packed up and got everything ready in

order that he might not be taken by surprise, and so be left behind. There was no one more pleased than Allan at this arrangement, as one of the chief delights of his life lay in tormenting the unfortunate man in every possible way.

One day the poor old fellow was cleaning the windows of his pantry, from the outside, and, being small of stature and the pantry-windows being high, he had recourse to a step-ladder. Allan had watched the preliminary proceedings with extreme interest, and, foreseeing sport, lay very low until Francis was standing on the top of the ladder, singing to himself and working hard at his windows. Now, if you try standing on the top of a step-ladder, with nothing to lean against or catch hold of, you will find that it does not give you the idea of complete security of tenure, more especially if you be fifty years of age and bow-legged. Allan crept slowly from his hiding-place, came behind

Francis, and gave the ladder a preliminary shake. Francis stopped his singing and his work for an instant, and said to himself, ‘One o’ dem earthquakes, I tink,’ and then resumed his work. Soon the whole ladder was convulsed, and Francis had to cling to the window-frame to save himself, shouting the while, ‘Ave Maria.’ He looked down, and saw Allan grinning below him.

‘Ah, Mas’r Allum,’ he said, in a pleasant tone. Seeing that he was in a very precarious position, and knowing that invective would, in all probability, only act as an incentive to further devilry, he had recourse to cajolery. His only answer was another shake. ‘Mas’r Allum, if I fall, I break window.’

‘Oh, no, you won’t, Francis; you will fall outwards.’

‘Then my head come off like top of pepper-box, if I fall on gravel.’

Another shake was the answer, and

Francis began to lose his temper. This pantomime went on for some time, until Allan was tired, and Francis, having used up all the Portuguese bad language he knew, had started on English, which was more various than polite (he had learnt it all from an Irish groom). At this point Richard Innes appeared on the scene.

‘What’s the matter, Francis? I can’t have you using that awful language. What are you doing?’

‘Having game with Mas’r Allum, sahib.’

‘Who taught you to say all those things you have been saying?’

‘Pat, sahib, he say it Irish.’

‘It sounded uncommonly like Billingsgate,’ thought Innes, and then he added aloud, ‘I think you had better confine yourself in future to invoking the Virgin in Portuguese.’

Francis, not having the remotest notion what his master meant, said, ‘Yes, sahib,’ and went on with his work.

The pure animal spirits of Allan delighted Francis, whose anger was like a summer cloud. But these escapades were of earlier date. Allan had passed the very early stage of annoyance, an art in which many boys show a truly Machiavellian skill.

A very devout Catholic, this Francis. He went religiously to Mass once a year. On Fridays, curiously enough, he never used to remember that it *was* Friday until after supper; he would then rise from his chair, strike his forehead with the palm of his hand, and ejaculate in a tone of horror, ‘Ave Maria, Friday, and I have eat meat!’ After which he would cross himself, and mutter prayers for at least fifteen seconds. As this happened every Friday without fail, one is inclined to think that Francis was not such a stickler for the forms and ceremonies of the Church as he wished one to believe.

At last the day arrived on which they

were to start for Melbourne. Reid was going to occupy the house after they had gone. One week was spent in Melbourne at Scott's Hotel, and then they embarked on board a P. and O. ship for Southampton. It was by no means with feelings of unmixed pleasure that Richard Innes and his wife left Australia. He was not only sorry, but anxious at leaving a man he liked so well as Reid, and for whom he felt the utmost sympathy; she, at leaving a country where she had spent sixteen years of unalloyed happiness. On the same ship were Mr. and Mrs. Low, and one of their daughters, who had just married a young Englishman. Their elder daughter had married and gone home three years before.

CHAPTER XI.

‘Friends, this frail bark of ours, when sorely tried,
May wreck itself without the pilot’s guilt,
Without the captain’s knowledge.’

ALISTAIR INNES had been laid to rest in the quiet churchyard of the village, across the river, and the house was desolate. All the house-servants had been dismissed, and none remained but the gardeners and the gamekeepers. Blairavon had always been a great sporting house, so it was not curious to find that in an exceedingly reduced establishment three gamekeepers still remained. One bitter November evening, in the year that the laird had died, after the dogs had been fed, and everything had been prepared for trapping in the morning, Gilchrist and his assistants were

sitting smoking their pipes over the gun-room fire. Gilchrist we know, the elder of the other two men was called M'Evoy, a middle-aged man with curly brown hair, shot with grey ; he had a face like a preternaturally wise rabbit. He was not very wise, but as honest as the day. The other man was a mere stripling of twenty, who sat assiduously polishing an already spotless gun.

Gilchrist liked to talk to the two men in the long winter evenings. He invariably monopolised the conversation, and from his vast experience was wont to throw out little maxims, which he hoped might sink into his hearers' minds. He had been talking of the old days at Blairavon, when Richard's grandfather had been alive. He had entertained a cordial dislike for Howard Innes, Richard's father, but had clung to the old place through his life and after his death, in the hope of his favourite Richard's return. After wandering over

many subjects he said, addressing M'Evoy,

' Ay, Sandy, noo that the laird's deid, mebbe we'll be for hevin' Maister Ruchard bock again. A braw shut, sirs. I niver seed a bonnier; no but what Alistair was a guid ane tae, afore he tuk tae the whusky, but efter that he was nae use ava. His hands were aye shakin' and his ee fu' o' watter, and gin' a pheeshunt or a paitrick rose at his feet wi' a whirr, mony's the time i' the last year or twa I hae seen him jist whang awa' withoot gettin' the gun tae his shudder ava'. Man, I was feart ance or twice that he'd shut his taes aff. Ay, ay, but I'm gey and sorry that he's deid; he was a guid laird afore he tuk tae the whusky. It's a tairrible thing is whusky, Sandy, my lad.'

' I believe that,' said M'Evoy, and as he said it, one might almost have thought that a weird shadow of a smile passed over his weather-beaten face, for he knew well that Gilchrist got through the best part of

a quart bottle of the neat spirit every day of his life.

‘Aye, he was a better ane than his faither iver was, wha was aye a prood lood-speakin’ carle wi’ his “ Gilchrist here, and his Gilchrist there,” and “ Don’t ye think we’d better tak this wood in twa beats, Gilchrist?” him as knew as muckle aboot shuttin’ as yon auld scowdy-barrelled muzzle-loader o’ mine there does the noo. Man, Sandy, I mind fine ae day when we were drivin’ the wee muir (there was na muckle drivin’ in those days), and Maister Ruchard was tae hae his first try at the drivin’ birds. Yon auld snifterin’ Lord Cassilis was ower wi’ his twa guns and his servants tae load, and his cam’-stool and his buke. Ca’ that shuttin’, thinks I to myself. If a man cannot shut without a’ that trash aboot him, he’s no fit tae come oot ava. Weel, there was young Maister Black tae, a bonny shut: so we were five guns wi’ Maister Alistair—enough for

the wee muir. We'd din fine i' the mornin', and we were to hae twa beats i' the aifter-nin'; we suld ha' had three, but the auld laird aye had sic a lunch brocht up that it tuk an 'oor and a half to get bye wi' it. What with shampang and sic like trash, and their pies and rubbish: and then they mun hae a haill cigar each, and tell lees ane tae the tither aboot hoo mony burds they had killed. Man, Sandy, there would be a fine bag mony's the day if a' the burds that are shut could be gathered, accordin' tae they folk. Noo, Sandy, my mon, I mun jist tell ye this, and it'll be a guide tae ye tae ken a guid shut as a rule. When a man begins tae talk lood aifter lunch aboot what he's shut, and tell lees aboot the big bags he's helpit tae get, ye may be sure that that man's no worth a damn, and ye can aye pit him i' the warst butt. Aifter lunch that day we placed the guns, and it was a gey lang beat, and my Lord Cassilis was nid-noddin'

ower his buke—he was in the next butt
tae mesel' and Maister Richard, and the
auld laird was soond asleep, I'm thinkin',
for a wheen burds cam' clean ower his heid
and he niver stirred. Soon anither pack
cam' ower, and he niver stirred, and I jist
couldna' haud in ony mair, so I loupit up
and I ca'ed out, "Shutt, ye bald-headed
auld divvle, why do ye no shutt?" Man,
as sure as deith I forgot aboot the bairn i'
the butt beside me ; onyways, I waked up
my lord i' the next butt at the first cry,
and he up and let fly twa barr'l's at a
green lintie, thinkin' it was a grouse
mebbe, his een no being accustomed tae
the licht aifter his sleep. The shuttin'
waked the auld laird, and then I minded
me o' the bairn, and I keeked at him, and
there he was laughin' fit tae burst. "Gil-
christ," says he, "yon's a very disrespectful
way to speak o' my faither ;" and I said,
"God-amchtie me, Maister Richard, but I
clean forgot ye, and I was jist fair wild at

seein' the burds fleein' ower his heid in hunnerds." Onywise, auld Lord Cassilis mun ha' heard me, for the neist day, when I went for orders, the laird says tae me, wi' his neb i' the air, " Aw, Gilchrist, ye must be mair careful o' your language in future; his lordship was shocked yesterday at your exhibition." " Aweel, sir," says I, " I'll no deny I was a wee angered, and it was becas they Kilwherry folk is aye crawin' ower me because we canna get a guid bag o' the wee muir." Hech sirs, tae think that that's echt-and-twinty year syne, and I wasna a young man then, Sandy. Do ye ken that I am echty year auld ?'

M'Evoy knew it only too well, as he had come as second-keeper to Blairavon twenty years before, hoping in a year or two to drop into Gilchrist's shoes ; but the hale old man had kept on, although, for the last ten years, he had done very little of the hard work, but that had been left to M'Evoy and a young man.

‘ Hoot-toot, man, gin it was na for the lasses, the laird mecht ha’ been livin’ noo and hearty ; yon hizzie, wha was mairrit on tae that ricketty-kneed fellow frae London, did for Alistair. He was a fine man afore that. Mebbe she has mair poseetion as the wife o’ a marquis—he was a marquis or a knight, or ane o’ they things,—but a bonnie lass like that canna be happy wi’ a man that’s no hauf a man. Ye mind him fine, Sandy, wi’ his wobbly knees, and his wattery een, and his eyeglass, and his wee bit feet. A man wha is a man has nae richt to hae feet like a wumman. Poseetion, indeed ! what’s poseetion ? I warrant ye, I hae been a happier man than ony o’ they great lords and leddies and dukes that hae poseetion—ay, and I would as sune be laird o’ Blairavon as duke o’ anything. What does a man want mair than a bonny hoose and lands, and a bonny wife ? I canna unnerstand hoo everybody is aye tryin’ tae push hissel’ on and be a

bigger pairson than he was meant tae be by nature. I am contented eneuch. Ay, I was mairit tae, ance, but ye'll no mind that, Sandy, she's deid fifty year syne ; she deed in child-bed, and the bairn deed sune aifter. We were mairrit twa years and she was a bit soor i' the temper, so I said tae mysel' I was better by my lane, and by my lane I hae been sin syne. But yon Lady Grizzle, I hae nae patience wi' her. At her ain door she had a fine, weel-set-up laddie wha jist loved the very grund she walked upon, and she would hae had him tae, for she liked him gey and weel, I seed that fine. Then yon pale-faced loon cam' doon frae London, and she poppit awa' wi' him in three months—and that feenished Maister Alistair. I niver see him smile aifter that. He was aye a dour man mebbe, and then he tuk tae the drink, and had a' they wild young fellies and wasters aboot the house, turnin' it oot-o'-doors and wastin' his siller. Hoot—I hae nae patience wi'

the lassies. Mind you twa young fellies—keep clear o' them gin ye want ony peace.' M'Evoys was a staid old bachelor of forty-five, and he wagged his head. 'Aweel, boys, we mun awa' to oor beds. I suld like fine tae see Maister Richard again though. I hope my auld een will hae that pleasure afore I dee.'

He had not long to wait. In January the news came that Richard and his family would be at home in March or April, and a start was at once made to put the house in something like order, though it only meant cleaning. For everything was left just as it had been left by the late laird. Old Gilchrist was wild with joy—he seemed to grow young again, and bustled about the place seeing that everything in his department was in perfect order. 'Noo, my lads, ye'll see a fine man amang ye agen; 'we'll hae braw times the noo.' Gilchrist did not count on the losses that had been entailed in the estate during the

tenancy of the two last lairds ; and his eighty years were as nothing to him.

Alistair's good intentions had all gone to the four winds of heaven when he had been jilted by Lady Grizel Ogilvie. Jilted he had been, though no proposal of marriage had actually been made ; she knew perfectly well that he was going to propose to her, and that he was only waiting to do so until his estate should be comparatively clear of debt. She, on her part, had every intention of accepting him ; for, as far as any woman who can apparently be swayed by purely worldly motives can be said to be in love with anybody or anything, she was in love with Alistair. Perhaps it is hard to judge her ; she was, after all, no free agent—her mother was the prime mover in the matter, and Lady Grizel merely a puppet in her hands.

The Marquis of Somerton, whom she had married, was just the man that Gilchrist had described—weak-eyed, weak-

kneed, and weak-brained, but still he was Marquis of Somerton, and Lady Grizel's mother, 'with her little hoard of maxims, preaching down a daughter's heart,' had instilled into her the fact that love was a mere fabric of the brain, that respect would come after marriage—and that it was impossible not to respect a man who had such a position in the world as Lord Somerton. It is even possible that Lady Grizel herself thought that Marchioness of Somerton sounded better than Lady Grizel Innes. Poor girl, she had no means of judging; had she obeyed the dictates of her heart, she would have known which name sounded better.

Alistair, who had been a peculiarly refined man, with a natural loathing for the coarseness of all kinds which goes hand-in-hand with the swinish swilling which passes among a certain class as a token of good-fellowship, sank gradually to the level of those men whom, in Oxford, he had re-

garded as a sort of different species to the more respectable human being. He filled his house with these men, whom he had barely known in former days. This was after the drink-fiend had him well in hand. Those gay young sparks sucked the money out of him as surely as though they had been leeches. This method of ‘conveyance’ is common enough. It is a very old tale. Chiefly through this system of blood-sucking carried on by his dear friends, he had scarce a penny to rub against another in fifteen years, when lo ! these same dear friends had disappeared. The boon companions—the Harrys and the Charlies and the Jacks—of a year ago simply *were* not, and the unfortunate man was left to curse his fate and to bewail the shortlivedness of human friendship. The mortgage went up and up, until there was nothing more on which he could raise money. From being an intellectual, high-souled gentleman, he degenerated into a mere brutal sot.

The pity of it all was that there was nobody to take him by the hand and help him over the stile, and see him well on his way on the right road. The fact that he was alone and could brood gave him no chance, for brooding at that time was the very devil. He was not strong enough to fight his thoughts alone, so, after having once started down the wrong lane, he made up his mind to hail a few friends to lighten the tedium of the journey. Surely somebody ought to be beaten when this sort of thing happens; for a marriage such as Lady Grizel Ogilvie made is a terrible satire on what one hears called—civilization. 'Tis said that these arrangements are made in Heaven. If that be the case, one would almost fancy that Heaven had a considerable amount of misery to answer for.

However, be that as it may, Alistair, having once started down the hill, increased his pace to such an extent that he reached the bottom in a very short space

of time. He had practically nothing of the estate left. He had the house, mortgaged up to the hilt, the moor, and very little else. Instead of buying back the farms which his father had sold, he sold more, till only the home farm was left. He knew really very little himself of the extent of what he had done away with—and it was whispered that he was getting impatient finally, because the end was so slow in coming. It was his peculiar sensitiveness which had driven him to indulge in a vice at which his real nature would have revolted with horror. He had literally worshipped Lady Grizel. A coarser nature would have soon recovered from the blow. He had rarely gone outside the grounds of Blairavon save to drive to Ayr on business, and only once after his disappointment had he seen Lady Grizel. She was out driving with her husband, and Alistair was also driving out of his own gates. He had to pull up in order

to let her carriage pass. She was lolling listlessly on her seat, with an expression of utter boredom on her face. Alistair gazed steadily into her eyes, and solemnly raised his hat. Lady Somerton, taken unawares, blushed crimson, and gave him a hurried little bow: Alistair felt, despite the contempt which he had for her, that he loved her just as much as ever, in his heart, and this one meeting (it was four years after her marriage) served but to hasten his destruction. He lashed his horse and drove furiously along the road, and ground out between his teeth,

‘Tied to that creature, who is more like a stuffed monkey than a man, it is too terrible, and they say the brute ill-treats her too.’

After some preliminary attacks, he finally died of delirium tremens at the age of forty-four, and went to join the wild restless crew of ancestors, some of whose lives had been only too like his own, in the

vault in the old churchyard across the river. The mourners consisted almost solely of the old servants of the house, his old county acquaintance having years before dropped entirely out of his life.

CHAPTER XII.

‘Cœlum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt.’

THE deck of the *Brahmapootra* on a bright sunny morning, with a fresh breeze blowing. It was the morning after they had left Melbourne. Allan was lying on his back on the deck with a pillow underneath his head, holding on to one of the legs of a fixed deck seat. He was not feeling well. When he got out of his bunk in the morning, he had dressed, saying airily, ‘Pooh, it is all nonsense about sea-sickness, I’m all right, I feel as right as a mole;’ and even as he said it, a strange feeling came over him, and he left his cabin hurriedly and went on deck. He had managed to swallow some breakfast,

and then his father had told him to lie on his back on the deck, which he had done all the morning, wishing the ship would be steady for only one short minute, when he was sure he would feel all right again. Mr. Innes and Allan's little brother Jack and his sister were utterly prostrated. To his intense disgust he had been relegated to the children's saloon to dine, being not yet twelve years old. Consequently he had to dine in the middle of the day. He was lying on his back, thinking how jolly it would be in the bush this beautiful morning, when a smiling steward came up and said, cheerfully,

‘Have some dinner, sir?’

‘No,’ shouted Allan, feeling too ill to be polite.

‘Better, sir; some nice roast pork.’

Allan did not answer, he merely threw a look of ineffable disgust at the steward as he rose and rushed to the side of the ship.

However, sea-sickness like everything else comes to an end in time, and on the evening of that day Allen felt well again, and on the following morning they anchored off Glenelg in King George's Sound, and went on shore to see the last of Australia. There was not much to see save a few utterly miserable looking aborigines who threw boomerangs for the benefit of the passengers; immediately on receiving a coin of any description they rushed off and bought gin with it, so that by the time the passengers left for the ship, there was none left capable of throwing a boomerang, for they were all lying log-like in the road, having tasted and drunk to the full, not for the first time either, the fruits of civilization. We are a great nation, a noble philanthropic nation. We conquer and annex and purloin in all corners of the earth, and introduce our missionaries and civilization. We are shocked, inexpressibly shocked, at the barbaric customs and

systems of justice previously existent among our conquered dependants. Yes, we are shocked. We introduce civilization, in the shape of certain square-faced bottles, and suffer (it is even whispered encourage) the benighted natives to drink and forget, to drink themselves into their graves, and so exterminate themselves. It is horrible to think that these poor souls have been left so long in utter darkness. We love our black neighbour so thoroughly, so disinterestedly. We cannot allow him to go on any longer in his wickedness. We will show him the light. We will show him that justice, according to the dictates of nature and simplicity of manners, is quite a fallacy. We will teach him that all men are equal, and therefore there is a law for the rich and another for the poor. We will teach him that two and two make five, or even on occasion three, it is quite a mistake to imagine that they ever make four. All that is quite out of date. We have

changed all that sort of thing. We introduce him to civilization, we initiate him into the delights of debauchery, murder for amusement, the meaning of the word indecency, idleness, thriftlessness, drunkenness, the Christian faith, in fact, we teach him the meaning of the word civilization, all contained in the aforesaid square-faced bottles. And then our missionaries, noble, high-toned, disinterested, devoted men they are,—but this is dangerous ground.

Compare the condition of the Zulus of to-day and twenty years ago. Then at least they had an ideal, and lived up to it according to their lights. Then they were sober and hacked each other to pieces, or bored holes in one another with assegais. They liked it, and it did not do anybody else any harm, and they were virtuous. After that they bored holes in us, so we took away the assegais,—nasty, dangerous things—and gave them ‘square face’ in-

stead. Now they are drunken and by no means virtuous, and they will soon be wiped out;—but they are civilized now. The missionaries know all about that. It must strike a foreigner as a somewhat curious anomaly that the city of London is paraded daily by people who have no money and have no means of getting any, save by theft, and that at the same time hundreds of thousands of pounds are constantly going out of the country in order that those sweet missionaries may civilize niggers. Civilization does not seem to get much further, however, than indecency, blasphemy, and gin. We, it is true, have an ideal, but we shirk the whole matter by saying, Well, no one can expect a man to approach *that*, you know, so we won't try, we will teach the niggers to do it instead. We are a great nation, we say so and we ought to know. But this is by the way; it is perhaps not in any way desirable that the aborigines of South Australia

should continue to exist, and possibly gin is the kindest method of extinction.

From Glenelg, across the deep blue Indian Ocean to Point de Galle; Allan began to enjoy himself thoroughly now, especially in the company of two jovial Frenchmen returning to their country after an exile of three years, caused by political intrigues in 1871. One of them was exceedingly fat, tall, and good-humoured, the other wore an expression of extreme sadness, which rarely left him. Allan made their acquaintance about a week after they had started. He was leaning over the rail at the stern watching the track of the ship, when he heard a voice behind him saying,

‘Vell, young man, ’ave you been seek?’

Allan turned and saw an enormously fat man, with blue eyes and a fair peaked beard, smiling down upon him. He was accompanied by a friend with whom Allan immediately fell in love, directly he saw

the soft, sad, hazel eyes fixed upon him.

‘No, sir,’ he said, ‘but I was very near it. In fact——’

‘Pardieu. I and my vrent ’ave been so ill. I ’ave lose ’alf my weight.’

Allan could not resist glancing at the fair round paunch, and thinking that he should have liked to see him when he was twice his present size. With the calm acceptance of Fate so characteristic of their race, these two sons of France had gone to their cabins immediately on coming on board, and had stayed there until now, when the sea was as calm as a millpond.

‘I am sorry for that,’ answered Allan, ‘but you are all right now.’

‘Yes, I am vell. Vat is your name, little man?’

Allan told them.

‘Alin Eenis, that’s a funny name, my name is De Rochefoucauld, and my frent’s is Bayard. Ve vill ’ave games when ve are vell. Oh, but I am vell now. There

is the dinner-bell. I 'ave not ate for a veek. Good-bye, my young vrent. I vill bring you fruits from dessair for you.'

Allan thanked him, and they disappeared arm in arm. Allan made friends with a quartermaster, who told him that if he went up the rigging he would be tied to it hand and foot until he paid a sovereign to come down again. He said he had only seven shillings, so he would not go. Then the quartermaster brought him two buckets and some rope quoits, and he played a game with himself until a fat old Lascar came and took them away: then he looked into the engine-room and saw another Lascar, a thin one this time, who turned his eyelids inside out and squinted, whereupon Allan fled thinking it was the devil.

Soon after that the people began to come out from dinner, and his fat friend approached him bringing apples and raisins, with his jolly face shining with content.

'Ah,' he said, 'I 'ave ate vell. I am content. But ve vill 'ave games—what you call Hiderseek.'

And they did. This good-natured Frenchman charged about the deck with an energy which would have done credit to a boy of fifteen, much more than to an exceedingly obese man who had, moreover, just dined heartily. After an hour of this the Frenchman dropped into his chair near Bayard, mopped his face and said,

'I melt. I grow thin. Ah, but zis is good.'

'Henri,' said Bayard, who spoke excellent English, 'you are a boy still, isn't he, Allan?'

'No, Mr. Bayard, but he's better than a boy, because he will play so long without losing his temper.'

'He never loses his temper, I think, and I am sure we have both had cause enough,' said Bayard.

‘Vat is lose temper? Get angry? no, it is of no use. Ah, mon Dieu, I can no more play to-night, Alin.’

Allan soon came to like these two Frenchman more than anyone else on the ship. Bayard taught him French, while De Rochefoucauld played all sorts of games with him, and never seemed to tire, while his jolly face was always beaming with smiles.

Point de Galle. Here they stayed two days, and wandered into the country, and bought curious little elephants made of ivory, and real diamond rings set in the finest gold for a rupee, and many other valuable things. It was here that M. de Rochefoucauld was nearly left behind. The ship was ready to start when Bayard discovered that his friend had not come off. He went to the captain and told him. The captain was sorry, but he must go on. At that moment a shout was heard in the darkness.

‘ Captain, I com now, stop ze ship ; dese dam niggars say I must pay five pounds, and I ’ave only one,’ at which the captain burst out laughing.

So it was. The boatmen had played a very common trick on the unhappy Frenchman. They had found that he had missed his friends, and that they could demand what they pleased to take him off to the ship. So they steadily refused to let him go on board unless he paid them five pounds. Bayard handed the money down the ship’s side in a handkerchief at the end of a boat-hook, and De Rochefoucauld came on board cursing volubly in French, and smiling blandly all the time.

‘ Ah, capitain, you would not leef me behind—eh, mon garçon ? No ? Vat ?’

The captain smiled and said,

‘ I should have been very sorry to leave such a pleasant companion. But, M. de Rochefoucauld, orders must be obeyed, you know.’

‘Peste ! Vat is orders ? I obey orders
ven I leef la France ; I like zem not.’

Allan here ran up and said,

‘Oh, I’m so glad you weren’t left behind,
M. de Rochefoucauld—it would have been
very dull without you.’

‘Ah, my young frient, you vould have
been sorry. Yes ? So vould I.’

At Aden, Allan had watched the boys
dive under the ship for sixpences, and
cram them into their mouths, when they
would roundly vow, speaking all the time
as though their mouths were full of pota-
toes, that the other boy had it, and that
they had dived all day and got nothing.
He liked to see them fighting under water
best, with their hair plastered with lime.
He had been ashore and seen Moses’ Well,
and could almost have sworn to a blade of
grass, but his fat, French friend told him
it was a piece of tin painted green, to make
Englishmen believe that grass grew there.
They had ridden on donkeys into Suez, De ,

Rochefoucauld's legs trailing on the ground. The trappings of a Suez donkey are not of the best. If you get a piece of frayed rope for girths, and some thickish string for a bridle, you are lucky. The girths of De Rochefoucauld's donkey broke, and he was rolled in the dust, shouting strange French oaths to the donkey-boy, who, grinning with delight, continued lashing the donkey. However, with shrieks and dust and perspiration, they finally got into Suez. They toiled up the canal, and got stuck in the middle, and De Rochefoucauld and Allan fished for imaginary fish. They went ashore at Ismailia and Port Said, and at Malta Allan got lost, and was found again just in time. At Gibraltar the two Frenchmen left, much to the regret of all on board, and they made many promises to come and visit Blairavon if they should ever come to Scotland. It was only a few days before this that Jack Innes had been induced to speak to either of the French-

men. His nurse having left him on deck alone, however, he was caught by Bayard, who stood him up in front of him, and said,

‘ Well, my little man, why are you so shy of me? You have never talked to me the whole voyage.’

Jack looked up at him with wide-open, wondering eyes, and said,

‘ Do you eat frogs?’

Bayard smiled, and said,

‘ No, why do you ask that?’

‘ Nurse told me that all French people eat frogs, and I was afraid you might eat me too.’

De Rochefoucauld laughed, and said,

‘ Ah, ze nurses do not speak true. My nurse, when I am so large as you, tell me dat if I am naughty de—vat you call him —bogie-man—ah, yes, de bogie-man would come and take me away. But I ’ave always been naughty, and I ’ave never seen de bogie-man.’

'I like you,' said Jack.

From that moment he began to conceive a low opinion of nurses in general, and his own in particular, a fact which she discovered to her cost.

Allan was so lost in amazement at the sights and sounds of London, that he practically remembers nothing about it. He had a faint recollection of London Bridge and dinner in the Great Northern Hotel, and a sleeping-carriage in which he could not sleep for excitement, and in the morning there was Glasgow and old Mr. Doig to meet them. A courtly old gentleman this, who took snuff, and spoke with a delicious Lowland accent, 'who would, if they pleased, accompany them to Blairavon.'

Then came a terribly slow journey through Paisley, Ayr, Dalrymple, Cassilis, until they came to the little wayside station of Blairavon. Allan's head was out of the window, and there was one figure on the

platform that caught his eye at once. It was that of a fine old man with a thick white beard, who looked about sixty-five, but was in reality a great deal more. He was dressed in a tweed knickerbocker suit, and had a stout oak stick in his hand, and was accompanied by an aged retriever. He was standing looking eagerly at the approaching train, with his deer-stalker cap in his hands. Allan jumped out at once, and the old man came quickly up to him and put his hand on his head, and, in a voice trembling with emotion, said,

‘I ken ye fine, young sir, ye’re jist Maister Richard owre agen. Aye, ye need na tell me your name, ye’re name’s Innes, I’se warrant ye.’

Richard Innes then got out, and seeing Gilchrist, for Gilchrist it was, went up to him at once; but the old man’s feelings were too much for him, he could not speak for a time, but simply brushed away the tears with the back of his hand, and then said,

‘Twenty years, Maister Richard, twenty years, an’ I niver thocht tae see ye ony mair ; mebbe I’ll live langer for the sicht o’ ye.’ To Mrs. Innes he said, ‘We ha’ na hed a leddy at the Castle for nigh upo’ thirty years, mem, but we ha’ made up for it a’the noo, wi’ sic a bonny leddy as yersel’.’

Mrs. Innes smiled and said,

‘Thank you, Gilchrist, that is a very pleasant welcome to my home.’

While the luggage was being got out of the train, and arranged, Richard Innes said,

‘Well, Gilchrist, Time has treated you very well. I hope that you will live long now that we have come back, and I hope that we may have many a day together on the hills.’

‘Aweel, sir, I ha’ na been on the wee muir this three year noo, but I feel like a bairn again at the sicht o’ ye. But I hae trained Sandy. Ye’ll mind Sandy, sir, a guid mon he is, but he’s young yet, ay he’s young yet, and if I canna come, he kens the shuttin’ fine, the noo.’

So he ought, thought Innes, since he has been on it every day for more than twenty years. By this time they were ready to start for the house, and Innes saw with sorrow, as they drove down along the avenue, broken down fences, uncut grass, unkept walks, and general decay in the place, which spoke only too plainly of the moral decay and neglect of the late master. The house itself Richard found but little changed. The smaller library or business-room, it was evident, had been the room mainly used by the late owner, and it was also evident that its services as a library had been dispensed with. Along one side the shelves had been removed, and a cellaret had been substituted, while on the other side was an array of decanters, cigar-boxes, a portable kettle and a cork-screw. Richard was taking his wife over the house, and when they came to this room he looked at it for some time and said, ‘ Poor fellow, perhaps I might have done

the same, Kate, if you had thrown me over.' Mrs. Innes did not answer. Pointing to the motto under the arms in the dining-room, he said, “‘Fuimus,’ you know what that means, Kate. Poor Alistair! That must have made him sad when he sat here alone.’

Mrs. Innes wanted Richard to complete the unfinished wing at once, but he said that he would defer it until he had looked into matters generally, and had put the estate into order.

Meanwhile Allan had wandered off with old Gilchrist, who gazed at him in admiration as he walked beside him. He took Allan down to the old ruined castle beside the river, and proceeded to weave an utterly impossible history of it for Allan’s benefit, to which Allan listened with flushed cheeks and brightened eyes, and mentally vowed that he too would do such deeds as those old heroes had done in days gone by. As they neared the house again, Allan looked

at it towering above him with an inward feeling of pride that such a magnificent place should belong to his father. Old Gilchrist, divining his thoughts, said,

‘ Ay, it’s a bonny place, ma lamb, and ye’ll no be the laddie to see it and the faimily gang tae ruin.’

Allan, as he wished him good-night, said to himself that he would rather die than lose by his own folly such a proud inheritance.

CHAPTER XIII.

'It's hame, and it's hame, hame fain wad I be,
And it's hame, hame, hame to my ain countree.'

A FORTNIGHT after they had arrived, and when they were well settled in their new house, Richard sent for Mr. Doig to come and stay with him for a few days that he might look into the state of affairs at Blair-avon, and see if it would be possible to put matters straight, and, moreover, finish the new wing of the house.

To his amazement and horror he found that far from paying off any of the mortgage on the estate, his unlucky brother Alistair had increased it greatly, with the result that the total now amounted to close upon twenty-five thousand pounds.

'I must say I can't understand how a

bachelor can have got through such a vast amount of money down here,' he said to Mr. Doig. 'He did nothing, you say, had practically no vice save that terrible one which cost him his life.'

'Ah, Mr. Innes, it is a very easy matter to let money slip through your fingers, if you don't take very good care of it, especially if you are surrounded by a lot of sharks all ready and eager to take a bite if they get the chance.'

'Yes, I suppose it was a case of blood-sucking; at any rate it is done, and can't be helped, so the best thing we can do is to put things as straight as possible, before doing anything else.'

He sighed as he said this and looked out of the window, over the river to the hills opposite, and thought to himself that it would be a long time before he got any of that back again. They worked away at figures and calculations for a couple of hours; then Richard looked up and said,

‘ Well, Mr. Doig, it is lucky that I shall not have to make much of an inroad into my income to pay this off. I have twenty thousand pounds saved which I shall pay down at once, and the other five thousand I ought to work off in five years—say. It ought not to cost more than three thousand five hundred pounds a-year to keep this place well and educate my children. But it is an awful disappointment to me, Mr. Doig, I had visions of seeing the old place restored to its former size, but I shall have to wait many a weary year before that comes about, I am afraid. What is the place worth now ?’

‘ Practically nothing ; you have nothing but the house, the little moor, the woods, and the home farm.’

Mr. Doig strongly disapproved of paying all the money off at once, urging him that it was not right or safe to trust entirely to his income from the gold mines in Australia.

‘ Not trust in the Black Hawk, my dear sir, that is too absurd, if you could only see it! The richest vein of gold in the whole of Victoria, why, it is safe as the Bank of England.’

Innes’s confidence in his mine lulled Mr. Doig’s fears, and so it was settled that twenty thousand pounds should be paid off at once, and that the rest should be paid off at the rate of one thousand pounds a-year or so, until the estate was clear again. Richard sighed again as he thought of it, and sat drumming on the table with his fingers for a long time. ‘ Well, well,’ he said at last, ‘ I need not complain, for if Alistair had married I should probably have never been here at all, and I don’t think I should ever be contented to live anywhere else; yet I can honestly say that, if it would have saved him from the fate which he has met, I wish it *were* otherwise.’

‘ I am sure of that, Mr. Innes,’ said Mr. Doig, taking snuff the while.

This affection of Richard's for his brother, he saw, was perfectly real, and it touched him more than he liked to show; affection was a symptom, (that is to say, disinterested affection) which he rarely saw in his profession, and being a kind-hearted man he appreciated it. So he took snuff. You will find snuff an excellent thing for concealing any foolish emotion, and a lawyer cannot afford to be emotional. Soon after this the good old man left, and shortly afterwards the house and grounds began to assume some appearance of order.

Allan, in the meanwhile, had lived literally out of doors, and appeared at luncheon but rarely. He had made Gilchrist his particular friend, and preferred walking about with the old man and watching him attend to his various duties, and listening to him descanting on the bygone glories of the house of Innes to being dressed in stiff clothes and shown to visitors. Mrs. Innes strongly objected to this,

and expositated with Allan, telling him that he would ruin his health by constantly being in the open air in all weathers, and she was sure that the society of that old gamekeeper could not be good for him.

‘ He won’t get any harm from Gilchrist, my dear,’ said Richard; ‘ and, as for his health, look at him ! ’

Mrs. Innes did look, and as she looked she smiled, as well she might, for his face was a sight to make any mother’s heart glad. Allan was not good-looking, but he had such a jolly, frank, open face that one wanted to laugh and be glad when one looked at him. By ‘ open face ’ one does not mean that he had a face as expressionless as a dumpling, with three depressions in it representing eyes and mouth, and an excrescence representing nose, such as one sees in a boy who is called ‘ worthy,’ and who has as much sense of the humorous or beautiful as a bandicoot. It is better to see a boy’s face stamped with the marks

of all bad passions and wickedness than such an one as this. For the former there is some hope of reform. For the latter there is none—he vegetates. Allan had bright, dancing grey eyes and curly, light-brown hair, a straight nose, and a large, well-shaped mouth and determined chin : a complexion such as many a fashionable lady would sell her immortal soul for, and a temperament as happy as his face.

‘I’m all right, mother dear,’ he said ; ‘don’t bother about me. Now that I am to have late dinner, I really don’t want any lunch.’

But Mrs. Innes insisted on his always taking sandwiches out with him, which he did, and they were daily consumed by a litter of retriever pups in the kennel. If the truth were known, this depraved young person used to have a very substantial meal every day with old Gilchrist, who would eye him with pride as he sat eating and giving his opinion on things in gene-

ral. Allan's presence at these meals was at first much resented by Rover, the retriever dog who accompanied Gilchrist everywhere, and slept in his room at night.

'Rover's gettin' a wee past the noo, Maister Awllan, but he's the pick o' the lot yet; are ye no, auld mon?' The dog understood and wagged his tail. 'I saved him oot o' a litter o' seevin; his mother deed jist aifter they were born—a fine worker she was tae—and the sax ither puppies deed, but I managed tae bring this yun up by hand, and he's aye been gey and fond o' me syne. He'll no leave me noo, wull ye, 'Rover?' ('Not very likely,' said Rover, with his tail.) 'I mind a young gintleman sayin', when Rover was in his first season, that I should ca' him Vascer, that was aifter he had jist fund a towerin' bird awa' ahint us, and I didna jist ken what the young fellie was drivin' at till I minded me of the history-book that I had read, in which it said that Vas-

cer de Gamuns, or some sic name, was a great discoverer—but ye'll hae read history yersel', Maister Awllan.'

Allan said yes, but that he had not got so far as that yet, and blushed and changed the subject.

The various families in the neighbourhood had called on Mrs. Innes, and among them Lady Dunure and her daughter, Lady Somerton, now a widow, her husband having died just after Alistair, of consumption and premature decay, in Madeira. There had been a long discussion at Ochiltree Castle as to whether they should call or not, Lady Somerton feeling a natural disinclination to do so. But her mother overruled her.

' My dear Grizel, what absurd nonsense you are talking ; you were never engaged to the man, and so I really cannot possibly see what earthly reason there is for your not going there.'

Lady Somerton felt otherwise, but she

was forced to acquiesce, since there was nominally no reason for her not going. Moreover, she thought it was just possible that Richard did not know the real cause of his brother's death, though she knew well enough. The only misgiving that Lady Dunure herself had was that Mrs. Innes might not be a lady.

'I hope she isn't a black, Grizel.'

'Mother!'

'One can't tell. Those Inneses are such curious people. They are always doing something absurd. Let us hope the woman is respectable.'

So they went, and were received somewhat icily by Mrs. Innes at first. Although she did not care for Lady Dunure, whose efforts at patronage somehow or other did not quite succeed, she found it impossible to resist the charm of manner of Lady Somerton. She tried hard to be simply polite, but found it would not do, and finally gave herself up to fate, and as will

be seen hereafter found in her a true and unselfish friend.

Lady Grizel had, naturally, bitterly repented her marriage. It could hardly have been otherwise, mated as she had been to what, by courtesy, was called a man. It was not all her own fault, after all. There is an excellent Utopian theory on the subject of marriage, which is, however, unfortunately based upon an impossible hypothesis. It begins thus, ‘Supposing the world were suddenly to become sane——’ After that, it is, of course, no use pursuing the subject further.

Among many others who called were Sir George Anstruther and his wife and their son, a dark-haired, brown-eyed handsome boy of fourteen. Francis was immediately dispatched to find Allan and bring him back to the house at once. This was no easy task. Mrs. Innes knew that Francis was her best chance—and he discovered Allan kneeling in the mud at the

side of a very dirty drain, with an excited fox terrier between his knees. Old Gilchrist was standing about twenty yards above him at a hole in the drain, with a ferret in his hand, having just previously dropped another one into the hole. Allan held up his hand to Francis to show him he must keep quiet. Suddenly two enormous rats bolted from the end of the drain. Allan let them get a fair start and then let the dog go. He wrenched them both in fine style, and Gilchrist said,

‘ I’m thinking they’ll be the only twa here, Maister Awllun.’

Francis came up and said,

‘ Mas’r Allum, misses say you’ve to come to the house. Lady Anstrudder’s dere.’

‘ Oh, bother it, I can’t come, we are just going to do some more drains, and Gilchrist says there are heaps of rats. Tell mother I can’t come.’

‘ But misses say I not come back without you; better come, Mas’r Allum.’

‘ Oh, well, I suppose I must. I don’t want to see Lady Anstruther.’

‘ Fine young gen’lman too, her son, all same as you.’

This was an inducement. So Allan made Francis run all the way home, much to his disgust.

‘ Good for your wind, Francis, hurry up.’

‘ Oh, oh, I hab too much wind go out, none come in ; stop, stop, Mas’r Allum, I die.’

Francis managed to reach the house, but collapsed on the steps, where he sat to recover his breath ; while thus engaged he was surprised by his master who had also been out, and was hurrying in to greet the Anstruthers.

‘ What on earth are you doing here, Francis ? ’

Francis had no breath left to answer, but put his hand on his stomach and looked up appealingly at his master.

‘ Great heavens, I hope he ain’t going

mad,' said Richard to himself, and then aloud, 'Get up and go into the house at once, and don't let me find you like this again.'

Francis fervently hoped that he would not, and just managing to gulp out, 'Yes, sahib,' he rose and reached his pantry more dead than alive.

In the meantime, Allan had managed to hurl on some other clothes and clean himself, and rush down to the drawing-room. The two boys looked at one another for an instant, and each coming to the conclusion that the other would 'do,' were soon deep in the things that boys talk about—cricket, and fishing and shooting. In the matter of fishing, Allan was completely at sea, but, at the description given by George Anstruther, he made up his mind that he would start the very next day on the Girvan water. Half-an-hour's talk between boys will produce a friendship which it would take years to bring about among men.

Among other things, George told him that he was going to school next term at Lussburgh. Allan had heard of Eton and Harrow and Winchester, but Lussburgh was quite a new light to him.

‘What, never heard of Lussburgh? Why, the fellows there all get into the Oxford and Cambridge fifteens when they go up, and into the eleven, too. A ripping place, I can tell you, and you don’t do too much work there, either.’

So Allan also determined that he would go to Lussburgh.

‘But where is it?’ he asked.

‘Oh, somewhere on the east coast. The head-master is an awfully nice old fellow; he can play cricket and fives as well as ever, and he’s over fifty.’

Richard Innes had wanted to send Allan to Winchester, but Mrs. Innes objected.

‘It is so very far away, Dick, and I really am afraid of this English climate for a year or two. We can put his name down

for Winchester, and he can go there when he is fourteen, if you like, but I really think that this school at Lussburgh seems a very good place. I have been talking to Lady Anstruther about it, and she says that it has gained a tremendous reputation in the last ten years or so. She says that it is a very refined edition of Rugby under Arnold, and that the head-master himself is a second Arnold. And, besides, it seems to be the only school where strict attention is paid to the boys' health and morals as well as to their education.'

'Well, dear, I will go and look it over if you like,' said Richard.

In a week it was known that Allan was to go to school at Lussburgh the next term.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘Τρηχεῖ ἀλλ’ ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος.’

‘But, Dick dear, it can’t be right. It is too ridiculous: fancy a boy dressed in knickerbockers, a flannel shirt, and a top hat!’

‘It certainly does sound curious, Kate, but if you can make anything out of this prospectus, well and good. I can’t.’

They had been reading the prospectus of Lussburgh which, even more than the average prospectus, required a considerable amount of hard thought, and produced, likewise, not a little amusement. It was even more enigmatical than the majority of these documents are. It was worse than that—it was literally incom-

prehensible. After worrying at it for hours at various times, Mrs. Innes, who had been vainly attempting, as far as it was humanly possible, to carry out the instructions contained therein, gave it up in utter despair. It was too much for suffering mortals.

‘Look, Kate, here it distinctly says, “No hats are worn;” and in another place, after talking about school chapel, and flowers for buttonholes, it says, “Any boy not wearing a top-hat at evening-chapel will be regarded as late,” from which I arrive at the conclusion that hats *are* worn, but *only* top-hats.’

‘Well, it seems very curious, and I must say it is a most outrageous dress. White flannel knickerbockers and a top-hat !’

‘It is no more curious than the rest of the prospectus. It is a complete enigma to me. Perhaps it is a magisterial joke. It distinctly says, “No fagging is allowed on

any account," and then just below, referring to boys being in time for tea, "fives-fags and football-fags are exempted from this rule." What on earth does it all mean? It is the most incomprehensible nonsense I ever read. Well, it don't matter; if it is right it doesn't matter, and if it is wrong it doesn't matter either, because Allan will know all about it in a week, and we need not make the mistake again. I would take him in his ordinary clothes if this thing' (pointing to the prospectus) ' did not expressly state, "that parents are requested to take particular notice of the rules with regard to dress." Tweed clothes are allowed too, you see, but when?'

A short time after this, Allan accompanied by his father went to school dressed in somewhat quaint garb. Not being conceited he did not care a rap about it, and would have gone willingly, disguised as a Red Indian, if it had been necessary.

Richard had not seen the head-master on his previous visit, as he had gone in the holidays. On being shown into the head-master's study, a handsome man, with a glossy black beard slightly streaked with grey, rose from a chair.

'The head-master, I presume,' said Richard.

'No, sir. I am the cricket professional.'

'The deuce,' thought Richard to himself, 'if the cricket professional is like this, I wonder what the head-master will be like.'

This man, whose name was Anderson, talked to Mr. Innes on various subjects in a perfectly well-bred manner, and was completely at his ease. He turned to Allan and said,

'You and I will become better acquainted, I daresay, later on, sir; you ought to be able to play cricket to judge by your eye.'

Just as he was finishing the sentence

the door opened and Allan turned round and saw what he afterwards described as a perfectly blue man ; and it was more or less true. He was about the middle height, with most beautiful silvery blue hair, a beard of a darker hue, a sort of blue-black, with streaks of silver in it. He had blue eyes, wore a blue tie, and was dressed in a suit of bluey-grey flannels. He came in without paying the remotest attention to Richard, but looked steadily and fixedly at Allan.

‘ This is the head-master, sir,’ said Anderson.

‘ Oh, Anderson, I wanted to see you about something, but I have forgotten what it is, but to-morrow will do,’ and then he turned to Richard and said, ‘ How de do !’ and for the rest of the interview never looked at him again, till just before he left, but devoted his attention entirely to Allan.

He did not speak to Allan, however, but merely looked at him, throwing his remarks to Mr. Innes the while over his shoulder, as it were. He did not look at Allan's face either, but at his neck, as far as Allan could judge. Under this steadfast gaze, Allan began to think after a time that something must be wrong with his coat, and on looking down his eyes were arrested by the head-master's shoes, at which he nearly burst out laughing, so ludicrous did they appear to his eyes. He said afterwards that they looked just like models for a punt, only even a punt could not be made to look quite so ugly as they were. Meanwhile, the head-master was hurling disjointed remarks at Richard.

'Son of a neighbour of yours came yesterday, Mr. Innes,—seems a nice boy.'

After saying this, he deliberately took his handkerchief out of his pocket and apparently began to eat it. All this time

he had never taken his eyes off Allan's neck. Suddenly he advanced on him, calmly took his tie off, and took out the neck-stud from his shirt and laid the two flaps of his shirt back ; and then he smiled, a smile of delight, and said,

‘ Ah, that’s better, now you look nice. Why do you wear a horrid colourless thing like this for a tie ?’ (It was a white silk tie.)

After he had accomplished this object, which had been apparently troubling him all this time, he brightened, stopped eating his handkerchief, turned to Richard, and literally overwhelmed him with a torrent of words about the school, and where Allan was to go, and finally said,

‘ Good-bye, I must go and play fives.’

When Allan was alone again with his father, he noticed that a puzzled expression lay on his father’s face, who said, half aloud,

‘ Well, this is something entirely outside my experience ; what an extraordinary

creature, eccentricity of genius, I suppose. It must be all right though, because Lady Anstruther praised the place so highly, and the head-master in particular. I hope I shan't see any more geniuses to-day though, I don't think I can stand it.'

Before many terms were over Richard found that it was very much all right. He left Allan with a great deal too much money in his pocket, and too full of spirits to be down-hearted or home-sick. Allan was happy, and that was everything. Richard had told his wife that the great thing about the place was that it was scrupulously clean and airy. The buildings themselves were poor, being of all ages. The original building had been an old monastery, part of which still remained, in the shape of a subterranean passage beneath a huge mound of earth where the bodies of the monks were supposed to have been buried. This mound was a source of great terror to small boys at

nights, more especially as the ghost of a lady, murdered in the dim, far-away past, was supposed to walk on certain nights in the year—presumably to air her somewhat scanty and musty clothing, since no other valid reason had ever been assigned for her night-time peregrinations. This lady had been sworn to on two separate occasions by a boy whose room overlooked the mound, but on investigation it was discovered that on both occasions he had supped unwisely and secretly off tinned lobster and macaroons, a feast calculated to raise the very devil himself in broad daylight, much more a phantom lady in the dark watches of the night.

Allan and George Anstruther became fast friends, for although George was two years older than Allan, he was quite as young in mind, having up till now been brought up entirely at home. They were in the same form, and usually in the same scrapes, but in justice to George it must

be said that Allan was invariably the inventor and ring-leader in these boyish freaks, which had no real harm in them. Their form-master was an excellent man in his way—but he had an amiable tendency to draw the long bow. This was never done in any way but for his own amusement, I fancy. He was a kind, good-hearted man, and a really excellent master, but he had a weakness. He liked to romance on the subject of his relatives. If one were to implicitly believe this worthy man, one would find that he was related to all the crowned heads in Europe. He affected uncles more than anything else. The only possible solution to the problem was that his grandfather must have been a Mormon in a very large way of business. He would talk in an airy way of all sorts of great people, and look up with a sort of deprecatory smile and interject ‘Uncle of mine, you know.’ This tendency tickled Allan so much that he

could barely refrain from bursting out laughing in his master's face. The climax was reached one day in a History lesson, when the form-master was expatiating upon the villainies of Cromwell. Allan looked up from his book with a face of enquiring innocence and said, blandly,

'Was he an uncle of yours, sir ?'

The man scratched his beard meditatively, and then said very quietly,

'No, my young friend, he was not. I think you would find out more about him if you were to write out this lesson half-a-dozen times.'

So Allan was bowled out. Previous to this he had been under a master in the third form who tried to teach everything by practical illustration. This is all very well in its way, but it is not thorough enough. You cannot teach an irregular Greek verb, for example, by practical illustration. This man had some very curious notions, one was anent the puri-

fication of the river Tay, in which, at that time, salmon disease was rampant. ‘ You just get a large tank of Condyl’s Fluid, built up at the side of Loch Tay, and when the disease gets bad, you just open the tap, and give the river a good wash down, and where is your disease then ? ’ Somehow or other, the idea did not seem ‘ to catch on ’ very much, and he used to bewail loudly the lack of enterprise on the part of the various riparian owners.

He determined to test the efficacy of his system in a small way, and consequently, having caught a diseased kelt one day in the spring, just below Dunkeld, he proceeded to pour a bottle of Condyl’s Fluid down its throat. The kelt gave every sign of disapprobation of which it was capable, and, on being put into the water again, it lay feebly on its side for a few moments, and then quietly died. The amateur fish-doctor regarded it with sorrowful eyes for a time, and then sadly murmured,

‘I am afraid I must have given it an over-dose.’

The gillies had looked on with amazement not unmixed with awe during the performance, and in the evening, as they were walking home to their cottage, one said to the other,

‘What was he daein’ wi’ yon pink stuff, Jock?’

‘Cod, I dinna ken, Wullie. I’m thinkin’ he will be an Englishman.’

Allan had tried to learn Euclid from a huge giant, with a huge voice, who thundered like Jove in anger for an hour every day at his class, and fondly imagined that this performance came under the head of teaching Euclid. Allan was nearly frightened out of his wits, but he did not learn any Euclid. The ways of schoolmasters are indeed quaint.

Allan and George had fallen in love with one another as boys do. They had no thought for anything but cricket and foot-

ball. They hurried through their work, and, considering all things, were well-taught. With Allan all such considerations were unnecessary. He threw himself heart and soul into all games. He regarded the captain of the eleven and fifteen as kings among men, and often wondered whether he could ever attain to such honour and glory as to play in either team. He literally worshipped the head-master, whom in his earlier years he regarded as a sort of god, and this respect did not diminish when he ceased to regard him as a head-master any more, and found in him a never-failing friend.

Some head-masters are even more worthless than the inevitable plaster bust of Homer to be found somewhere in some part of every school, in the library, big school, or the ashpit. The bust may possibly stir in some wayward heart a feeling which tends to thoughts of higher things, but the headmaster referred to might just

as well be the putty image of a heathen god for all the use he is to the school, or to anyone. These men are such who will speak ‘with a good steady impudence, and being long inured to talk what they do not mean, look as if they meant what they said.’

CHAPTER XV.

'The snowy wings
Of innocence and love protect the scene.'

ALLAN's first visit to the Anstruthers at Ardarrochar was merely the precursor of many others, and a friendship sprang up between the two families which never relaxed, but rather became all the more firm as time went on. George Anstruther was only too glad, boy as he was, to have the run of such an exceedingly pleasant house as Blairavon, and Allan was never so happy as when he was at Ardarrochar. George, in his boyish way, had fallen in love with Allan's fairy little sister Amy, who was a strong contrast to Allan, having a mass of almost raven-black hair and large

brown, expressive eyes, and a sweet little mouth that looked too small to be of any material service in the serious business of life.

In the summer of 1877, when Allan was getting on towards fifteen years of age and George was nearly seventeen, Allan was again at Ardarrochar for the summer holidays. The young rogue had had great difficulty in getting away from home. He had spent the greater part of the Christmas holidays there, and Mrs. Innes was beginning to complain of his continual absences; but a letter came from Lady Anstruther which said that 'they really could not do without him, that Lady Somerton had only consented to come on condition that Allan was there, and that George was positively insufferable in the house, and said that he intended being so until Allan came,' and so on, all of which was very flattering to Mrs. Innes's vanity, and she finally consented on condition that George

would spend the last half of the holidays at Blairavon.

This was exactly what George wanted. This astute young gentleman had planned it all beforehand, and had gained both his objects. He really wanted Allan at Ardarrochar, and he also wanted more particularly to go to Blairavon with Allan, to renew his flirtation with Amy. So Allan, after spending one week at home, got into the train at Blairavon, and pounded away down to Girvan. Here he had to wait some time, because Girvan, you must know, is a terminus, and if you want to go farther on, down through Ayrshire and into Wigtonshire, you must back out of Girvan and then turn sharp to the right over the Girvan water, and so on towards Stranraer. Ardarrochar is about twenty miles out of Girvan, standing quite near the railway—a square, ugly-looking white house, with a background of birches, stretching up and up until they meet a

huge, frowning fringe of rock, eight hundred feet above. In front of the house a smooth lawn slopes down to the burn, where Allan had already done great execution among the trout. On the other side of the burn ran the railway, from which, at intervals among the larches which bordered the line, one could occasionally catch a glimpse of the house shining through the foliage. Allan's head was out of the window for two miles before he came to Pinwherry, the station for Ardarrochar, was reached.

'I wonder if George will be there to meet me,' he thought to himself. 'Of course he will. I hope he has brought the pony-trap without a groom, and then I can drive old Mumps back to the house. If it is that silly dog-cart—I vote we walk; confound grooms anyhow. A fellow can't talk and say all he wants when there are a lot of beastly servants about.' After which sage reflection the train turned a

slight curve in the line, and the station came in sight; and Allan, seeing George on the platform, gave vent to a wild shriek and waved his hat, which caught in a branch of a tree overhanging the line, and then dropped into the burn below. ‘Don’t matter,’ said Allan, ‘more like Lussburgh without a hat.’

At the station George said,

‘Oh, bother the portmanteau.—Here, Simmonds, send it up to the house at once, will you? Come on, Allan, I want to drive you up to the new butts they have stuck up for grouse-driving. It’s only five, and we needn’t be in till half-past six—then you’ll have lots of time to see mother, and dress for dinner.’

They started along the road, Allan driving, having soon persuaded George to give him the reins. They had to skirt the hill and cross the burn, and drive up a bad road on to the moor. It was a good five miles, and they rattled on as though they

had not seen one another for years, instead of only having parted a week ago. They stopped at the bridge leading over the burn, and watched the trout scuttling up and down in the water glittering below them.

'By Jove, there's a whopper, George! I bet you he's two pounds. He's just like that big fellow I caught at Easter in Jean's Wheel.'

George thought differently, as this one was out of condition now; whereupon Allan proceeded to give him a long discourse on condition in trout, which must have been interesting to George, who had taught him to fish, and knew more about trout and their habits than many a gillie. They reached the moor, inspected the butts, which Allan pronounced 'clipping,' at the same time adding mentally that they were not a patch, for position or a clear sight of the birds, on those on the little moor at Blairavon.

George took the reins on the way home, and they bowled along merrily until they reached the bridge. Allan saw a figure leaning against the side of it when they were some two hundred yards away. As they drew closer he said to George,

‘I wonder who that man can be there? There’s no cottage near here.’

George looked up and said,

‘He must be one of those beastly colliers from Banar, on the other side of the hill.’

As they approached the man raised himself from his reclining position, and advanced unsteadily a couple of paces towards the middle of the road. He was obviously drunk, and, moreover, dangerously so.

Now there are several kinds of drunkards. There is your maudlin drunkard, who is comparatively harmless; your sudden drunkard, who is also harmless, for he usually falls asleep and wakes up to sing; and then there’s your fighting drunkard.

Of this sort are the majority of Celts and some others. I once knew a man who, to tell the truth, was very often drunk, and it affected him in a very curious manner. He was peculiarly pacific in his cups ; he was more, he was devotional. He used to get praying drunk, in other words. He was a pilot, attached to a private harbour in the east of Scotland, and possibly from using such extraordinarily bad language when he was performing his duties (not that he was always strictly sober then by any means) his conscience pricked him when drunk, and so he fell a-praying. Be that as it may, one New Year's Eve he took a great deal too much of the national beverage and was proceeding homewards, and, moreover, steering a very fair course : (he could always walk more or less straight when Bacchus had been too kind). As he walked, the desire to pray came upon him very strong indeed, so he proceeded to pray in the middle of the high-road at

half-past eleven on New Year's Eve. Now the middle of the high-road is not exactly the place to select at any time to render thanks to one's Maker ; but on New Year's Eve in Scotland it was nothing short of madness. However, down on his knees he went, and started. As luck would have it, a cabman, who had also been seeing the Old Year out (if one can call such a process 'seeing the Old Year out,' which consists in drinking till one becomes morally and physically blind), was allowing his horse to take him home at his own pace. The horse, from having stood on a frosty night for three hours outside a public-house, was restoring his circulation by going at a good steady canter, having, in his mind's eye, fodder and a warm stall with soft straw. Davie was too much engaged in prayer to take any notice of such an earthly thing as a cab, and the consequence was that one of its wheels caught his shoulder, and he was hurled

incontinently into the ditch at the side of the road, where he lay for three or four hours, insensible with drink and the shock of the passing cab-wheel. He had no recollection, when he woke, of the circumstances which had placed him in the ditch, but he had a most undeniable pain in his right shoulder. He went home sadly, caught erysipelas in his arm from the exposure, and had to have it amputated. After which he came to his master and demanded a pension.

‘What for, Davie?’

‘Injured while on duty, sir.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Aweel, if a mon’s no daein’ his duty when he’s prayin’, I dinna ken when he is.’

But we are wandering from our drunken collier. George was driving, and Allan was sitting beside him, with a good, thick, knobby holly-stick in his hand. The man rushed at the pony’s head as they were passing, and caught the reins, at which

Mumps promptly reared and backed against the parapet of the bridge.

‘Let go the reins,’ shouted George.
‘What do you want? We shall be in the burn in a minute.’

‘Gie us some siller,’ said the man, in a thick voice. ‘I ken ye fine, my young sparkie. Ye’re son to that auld hook-nebbit deevil Geordie Anstruther, wha gat ma brither sentenced to sax month without the option, for ca’in his wife ower the heid wi’ a poker. Why suld he no? She was his *ain* wife?’

‘Let go the reins. I don’t know anything about it.’

‘No, I’ll no. I’ll back the cairt ower the brigg, if ye dinna gie us some siller.’

Allan was next the stone parapet of the bridge: so he stepped on to it quickly, and before the man could turn round, had brought his holly-stick with all his might down on the side of his head. The man dropped as though he had been shot, and

Mumps, let free, showed an inclination to bolt. They stopped her, and went back to look at the man.

‘ By Jingo, what a crack you gave him, Allan.’

‘ He isn’t dead, George,’ said Allan, with pale face.

‘ Oh, no, he’s only stunned.’

They got down and dragged him to the side of the road and left him. All this had delayed them considerably, and it was close on seven when they reached Ardarrochar. Lady Anstruther greeted Allan kindly, and he rushed upstairs to dress for dinner. George followed, after giving orders that the police were to be sent to look after the man on the road. Allan came down to the drawing-room in about twenty minutes. He had acquired the excellent habit of dressing quickly at school. He found the room, as he thought, empty, so he went up to the large bow window, and looked out over the lawn

towards the burn. It was a lovely August evening. The sun was sinking behind the larches on the opposite hill, and threw them out black and sharp against the sky. A slight heat-mist was beginning to rise from the river, and the rabbits were coming out of their holes suspiciously, to take their evening meal. Allan watched the sky for some time, and gave a sigh of pleasure. Even at that age the beauty of nature had a powerful effect upon him: then he began to think that he was uncommonly hungry, and was just going to look at his watch, when a sweet voice—almost at his elbow said,

‘Aren’t you going to speak to me, Allan dear?’

He turned and saw Lady Grizel sitting almost behind a curtain, at the window at his side.

‘I beg your pardon, Lady Grizel, I thought there was nobody in the room. I hope I didn’t whistle.’

‘No, my dear, you didn’t, and I am glad you did not see me at first, because I like to look at you when you think you are alone.’

Lady Grizel had almost a passion for Allan. She seemed to be spending on him all the love which ought to have belonged to his dead uncle.

‘Tell me all about them at Blairavon, dear.’

Allan immediately answered,

‘Oh, they’re all right—mother didn’t want me to come though, she says I am never at home, but I like coming here. George is such a good sort,’ and then he added as an afterthought, ‘And I knew you were going to be here, Lady Grizel, and you are always so kind to me.’

Lady Grizel stroked his curly brown head, and smiled and said,

‘That’s a very pretty speech, Allan. I am glad they teach you manners at Lussburgh.’

Just then Sir George Anstruther came in, and patted him on the head, and said,

‘ So you have found your way here again, my young friend; well, I think we are always glad to see you.’

And he turned to Lady Grizel. Soon all the others came trooping in, in a body. One or two of them Allan had never seen before. One of the men struck him particularly. He was a small man with very weak eyes and a weaker little moustache. He had no chin to speak of, a protruding underlip, and straw-coloured hair. He wore an eyeglass. If there is one thing more disfiguring than another it is an eyeglass. It makes even a fine-looking man appear silly, and completely obliterates a small man. One is constantly feeling that the person has been made to fit the eyeglass. However, it is fashionable—at intervals. Most things that are fashionable are silly, and therefore suited to the taste of the majority. One always thinks of the

dandy German officer's remark when one sees a man with an eyeglass—‘ I can't see out of one eye because of the glass in it, and I can't see out of the other because I have to screw it up to keep this damned thing in the other. However, I must wear it—it's all the go.’

The man whom Allan was looking at was beautifully dressed, apparently wore stays, and he lisped. He was lisping now to George's sister Mildred, a tall girl with a pretty piquante face, flashing eyes, and great coils of wavy brown hair. She was apparently laughing at him. Allan whispered to George, ‘ Who is that ? ’

‘ What, the little man ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ That is the Right Honourable Angus Macnab Dundas Viscount Maginnis,—he looks it, don't he ? Come on, I'll introduce you. Mildred must be tired of him.’

Lord Maginnis neatly fixed Allan with his eyeglass, and said drawlingly,

‘Tho glad to thee you, my father wath a great friend of your gwandfather’th. He, he !’

Allan was too amazed at this prodigy to speak, but George said to him, as they marched into dinner, in an undertone,

‘He’s a great swell in Dumfriesshire. Frightfully rich, and the governor has him here because of his influence in the county, through his estates on the side of Girvan. You see the governor has to keep in with all these people, because of his seat as member of the county.’

At dinner George told the story of their adventure for the benefit of those who had not heard it, and everyone was loud in Allan’s praises for his share in it. Lord Maginnis said, ‘Gad, a doothid thmart boy,’ at which Allan felt inclined to kick him. You must remember in future that Maginnis lisps. I cannot go on writing such insufferable bosh as the above remark of Maginnis looks on paper.

‘Is the fellow dead, do you suppose?’ he said to George.

‘Oh, no, he was only stunned.’

‘Then you had better keep out of his way; I shouldn’t care to have a feller like that loose, if I had knocked him on the head, begad, he, he.’

‘Oh, he is safe enough for six months or so,’ said Sir George, ‘I’ll see to that.’

Sir George was a pompous old man, with a great idea of his own importance in the county, which he showed very clearly.

‘Can’t you get that road closed, Sir George?’ said Lady Grizel.

‘No, I am afraid I can’t do that. Some mad Radical scamp came stumping round the country, when I tried to have it closed three years ago, proved a right of way, and the people took it up at once, with the result that it is a public road as far as the edge of the moor, although my grandfather made every inch of the road himself, and

through his own property too, more than seventy years ago.'

'That's doosid hard lines, Anstruther. I wonder what the world's coming to. We seem to be governed by these Radical fellers now-a-days. They're talking about abolishin' the House of Lords. How the doose is a feller goin' to get his livin', I'd like to know. Gad, I can't do anything if they take away my estates,' said Lord Maginnis.

Allan conceived a great dislike for his lordship, and said to George after dinner,

'I don't like that man, George, he seems to be an empty-headed snob;' then, suddenly remembering that he was talking of one of his host's guests, he added, 'But I dare-say he is a good enough fellow when you get to know him.'

'There's nothing wrong about him,' answered George, 'except his lisp, and his appalling ugliness. He is really very clever, only he pretends to be silly. He's

enormously rich, and he's spoons on Mildred, and I suppose he'll marry her too, because the governor is awfully keen on his support. His title is as old as the hills. But, by Jove, if I had anything to say in the matter, I wouldn't let her.'

To which statement Allan tacitly agreed, adding inwardly, 'I would rather shoot him than see him marry Amy.'

'I believe you are in love with that boy,' said Lady Anstruther.

'Perhaps I am,' said Lady Grizel. 'I did his uncle a great wrong, and I must do my best to repair it.'

Lady Anstruther answered nothing, having nothing to say, and none knew better than she that what Lady Grizel had said was true, and, moreover, that she thoroughly regretted the great mistake that she had made.

Allan stayed on at Ardarrochar, enjoying himself as only a boy can. He could shoot tolerably well, better than Lord Maginnis,

who was troubled by his eyes—and his eyeglass. Allan took great delight (when for any reason the party was broken up into small sections, and when he found himself with Lord Maginnis) in walking very fast. This was quite inexcusable in whatever way you looked at it, because they walked over the birds, and did not give the dogs time to work. These tactics always brought forth an ejaculation of ‘Steady, Maister Awllan,’ from the keeper, and ‘Hang it, young man, you can’t expect a feller to shoot when he’s walkin’ at this pace. I’m so doosid hot that my glass is constantly slipping out of my eye, and my legs ain’t made of gutta-percha. It’s all that infernal trainin’ you get at Lussburgh. I should like to shoot the head-master.’

All of which was intensely interesting to Allan, who revelled in torturing the little scarecrow. Everything comes to an end, and Allan, at the end of August, found

himself saying good-bye, and was really sorry to go, although George was coming with him. A boy always prefers to go to other people's houses than to stay in his own, however pleasant it may be. He feels himself independent, and he has none of the petty restraints of home life. Of course this is very wrong and unnatural, but for all that, true. The pony-carriage was waiting, and everyone was at the door to see them off. Sir George pompously patted him on the head and said,

‘Remember me to your father, and tell him we have been very glad to have you here.’

Lady Grizel had taken an affectionate farewell of him previously in private, and told him—‘Remember, Allan dear, if ever you are in trouble, you are to come to me, or let me know about it.’

Allan had kissed her and said that he would, and I suppose at the time that he meant what he said. Lord Maginnis shook hands with him and said,

‘Good-bye, my young friend, I hope you will have learnt to walk slower the next time I see you.’

Allan laughed, and they were gone.

George was in love, and an electric railway going a hundred and fifty miles an hour would have been too slow for him. Possibly at seventeen one gets the fever worse than at any other time, but it is not lasting and is apt to be blotted out by any event of passing interest; at seventeen it is more interesting to the disinterested observer, and Allan was enjoying himself immensely. He knew all about it. George was very bad indeed, and by the time they had reached Girvan, he had grown peevish.

‘I knew it,’ he shouted, ‘three quarters of an hour to wait, just because the guard wants to have a drink, or talk to the station-master, or some rot of that sort. I shall write to the *Scotsman* about this miserable line. I’m certain it’s the worst in the whole British Empire.’

Allan and he were walking up and down the platform, and as they passed the waiting-room, a thick-set, short man, with grizzled hair, and brown eyes set very near together, came out. He looked at Allan, and Allan thought to himself that he had seen the face before. As he passed again, the stranger took hold of his arm and said,

‘Don’t remember me, Allan?’

As soon as he spoke, Allan knew him and said,

‘Why, it’s Mr. Reid. How on earth did you come here? I thought you were never going to leave Australia? And how did you get to Girvan?’

‘Well, yes, my name’s Reid. Came on a steamer. Got tired of Australia. Asleep when I passed Blairavon. So I’m going back again with you, it appears.’

Allan introduced George.

‘This is my friend, George Anstruther.’

Reid gave him one searching glance,

which evidently proved satisfactory, for he held out his hand and said,

‘ Glad to know any friend of Allan’s.’

‘ Father *will* be glad to see you, Mr. Reid. Does he know that you are coming?’

‘ Told him in my last letter that there was nothing on earth which would make me leave Australia.’

‘ Here’s the train,’ cried George. ‘ Come on.’

CHAPTER XVI.

‘Till, like a clock worn out with beating time,
The weary wheels of life at last stood still.’

WHEN they were in the train, Allan repeated,

‘But, Mr. Reid, you said you were not going to leave Australia.’

‘Changed my mind ; thought I would like to see the old place again ; besides, circumstances alter cases.’

Allan did not know to what this might refer, but he saw that there was something changed about Reid, and he did not know exactly what it was. At the station they found no one to meet them, at which Allan was much surprised.

‘Is no one at home, James ?’ he said to the footman.

‘ Yessir,’ said the man, touching his hat ; ‘ but Gilchrist was took very bad last night, sir, fit or something, and the master ’ave been there most all day, and the mistress and Miss Amy went up just afore we started.’

This was very bad news for Allan, who simply adored the old man, and he was all impatience to get to the house. Directly the carriage stopped, Allan, throwing manners to the winds, and forgetting everything in his anxiety, rushed away past the stables, and through the wood, up to Gilchrist’s cottage, where he found his father, mother, and Amy. Old Gilchrist’s eyes glistened as he saw Allan.

‘ Ah, my bairnie, but I’m richt glad tae see ye, I thocht I’d mebbe dee withoot haein’ anither crack wi’ ye, and sayin’ good-bye tae ye. I think I’d no lie easy in my grave, if you had na come.’

‘ What nonsense !’ said Richard ; ‘ you’ll be all right again in a week or so.’

‘Thank ye kindly, sir, but an auld man o’ echty-fower dis na get ower a thing like this. Aweel, I daursay I hae lived lang eneuch—I’m no muckle use the noo onywise.’

‘I think that he had better be left quiet now, sir,’ whispered the nurse, who had just arrived from Ayr; ‘sleep is the best thing for him.’

They all left and came down towards the house, but when they had gone about a hundred yards, Allan suddenly remembered that he had not said ‘How d’ye do?’ to his fox-terrier, so he ran back to the kennels to do so. On their way down they met George, and Mrs. Innes said to her husband just before meeting him,

‘My dear Dick, I forgot all about him; how very rude of me to be out of the way when he arrived.’

George being in the presence of his lady-love, aged thirteen, was exceedingly embarrassed. This passion of George’s was

certainly something out of the common, as the amorous youth of seventeen usually wastes his affections on some bewigged and rouged spinster of forty-five. At the sight of Amy he was dumb, and, having come out of the house solely on the chance of meeting her, he immediately prevaricated, and said that he had come out to find Allan. Amy, with supreme indifference to his presence, said,

‘Oh, he’s up at the kennels ; you will catch him if you go by this road.’

Thus you will see that Allan in his excitement over Gilchrist, and George through his embarrassment over Amy, entirely omitted to mention the fact that Reid had arrived.

Richard went straight to the small library, or business-room, to write some letters, and, opening the door without any noise, saw a man with his back turned towards him smoking a cigar.

‘Who the deuce can that be?’ he said to

himself; and then he shut the door sharply, so that the man turned round and said,
‘ Hallo, Dick !’

‘ Great God, Harry ! How on earth did you come here ? Are you sure it is you in the flesh, old man ?’

‘ Pretty solid, I think,’ said Reid, smiling.

They were standing with their hands clasped, eyeing each other critically, and Innes said, ‘ I must tell Kate.’

He rushed out into the inner hall, and called out at the pitch of his voice,

‘ Kate, Kate ; come here at once.’

Mrs. Innes, who was not three yards off him, having just gone in at the drawing-room door, said,

‘ Dick, my dear, what *is* the matter ? I hope nothing else has happened ?’

Richard turned round, and she saw by the smile on his face that at least it was nothing very terrible, and he said,

‘ Who is the last person in the world whom you would expect to see here ?’

Mrs. Innes promptly replied,

‘ Mr. Reid.’

‘ He’s here, in the library.’

‘ You must be mad, Dick.’

‘ Come and see, my dear.’

After the heartiest of welcomes, Reid said,

‘ Surprised to see me, Mrs. Innes ? Thought I should surprise you.’

‘ Naturally,’ said Mrs. Innes. ‘ It isn’t a month since Dick read me a letter from you, in which you said that nothing in the world would induce you to come home.’

‘ Yes, that is true. I started a fortnight after that. You see, I saw in the paper that a certain person was dead, so I came back, knowing there was no chance of my knocking up against her.’

They knew to what he referred, and were silent, for they knew that it was a subject which affected him deeply, and one on which he rarely touched. After a minute or two he went on,

‘ I can only stay a fortnight with you, Dick. I have some business to do in London after that, and I shall start back again before the month is out.’

‘ What nonsense, Harry ; what is the good of coming home for a month ? You will have to stay here for at least two months before you can expect to escape.’

‘ Impossible. I must get back to the Hawk. Left Tregea in charge, and haven’t very much faith in him.’

‘ Why, Tregea was the most honest man in the whole district.’

‘ Yes, but that don’t say much in Fryerstown.’

‘ Harry, you’re hopeless. I wonder if you will ever get any faith in the human race ?’

‘ Don’t know, I’m sure ; perhaps if I stayed long enough here I might.’

At dinner that night, which they had alone (as the 12th of August party had just left, and no one was asked for a week

to come,) there was lots to say about old friends and Australia generally. Francis, when he had seen Reid at the door on his arrival, looked as if he were gazing on a ghost, but fetched enough breath to say,

‘ Massa Reid ?’

‘ Yes, it’s me. How d’ye do, Francis ? Like Scotland ?’

‘ Yes, sahib. You come to live here, sahib ?’

‘ Not quite, Francis.’

Francis apparently regarded him as a being risen from the dead, for he could not keep his eyes off him during the whole of dinner. After dinner, Allan and George and Amy amused themselves in the drawing-room, and Innes and Reid retired to the library, where Reid told him that, in an old *Times* which he had seen in Castlemaine, he had read of the death of his former wife, and that suddenly a great desire had come upon him to revisit England, and see his friends again : so he had

packed his trunks and come straight away.

‘How’s the Hawk, Harry?’

‘Same as ever; rolls out about ten thousand pounds a-year, as you know, as regularly as possible. It was a lucky hit on your part, Dick, trying that Fryer’s creek district.’

‘Yes, I was sure of gold there,’ said Innes, in rather a self-satisfied way.

‘Not so certain about that, Dick. It was your luck. Some have luck, and others don’t. You are my luck. If I hadn’t met you, my bones would have been whitening in one of those gullies many a year ago.’

‘I don’t believe that. I am no believer in luck myself. I think in this world most people get paid according to their deserts more or less. It mayn’t always be gold, or what people call the pleasures of life, but a payment, a compensation of some sort. An unlucky man don’t exist in my opinion. Everyone has their ups

and downs naturally ; but persistent bad luck, when a man does his duty, is impossible. One certainly hears of the bad luck of So-and-So ; but when you come to examine the matter, you usually find out that the bad luck has originated entirely from the man's own fault.'

' May be so, Dick. I was unlucky enough before I met you ; daresay it was my own fault. Too easy-going don't pay. Fellow has to look pretty smart after his own if he wants to keep it.'

' That's just it, Harry. Most people "let things slide," as the Americans say, and trust to Providence, and call her a faithless jade when they find themselves left in the lurch. Providence won't stretch out a hand to help a man unless he is doing his very hardest to help himself, of that you may be quite certain.'

' Daresay you're right, Dick. Perhaps if I hadn't trusted so implicitly in my wife, and looked after her a little more, things

might have turned out differently. Yet I don't know—a woman who has love to scatter about as she had, ain't worth much, after all.'

Richard knew well enough that Reid was apt to blame himself and not his wife on this point, so he made a point of keeping silence when the subject was mentioned. They wandered over many subjects, and at last Richard said,

' It is late, Harry. You know your room. Turn sharp to your left when you get to the top of the first flight. These floors are confoundedly confusing: they are so much alike. Last year when we had a house-party in August, and a lot of us were in the smoking-room at the top of the house, a man who was staying here walked into what he thought was his own room and turned up the gas, when, to his horror, he found Lady Somerton asleep in bed.'

Allan and George amused themselves

with shooting, and fishing, and riding ; but Allan was very much pre-occupied. He could not get on without Gilchrist. Poor old Gilchrist, he was sinking slowly into his grave, and, in consequence, the guests who had been invited were put off. He became weaker and weaker, and at last one evening, after dinner, a message came down from Gilchrist to say that he would like to see Mr. Innes, as he thought that he had not much longer to live. They all went up in a body, with the exception of Amy. Directly they entered the room, Richard saw that the end was very near.

Gilchrist was lying propped up with pillows, and his breath was coming unevenly. His good old white head was bowed on his chest when they came to the door. As they came in, he turned his head to the door, and his darkening eyes lightened up for an instant when he saw Allan. On one side of the bed was the old retriever Rover, and Gilchrist was

feeble fondling his head. The old dog was deaf and almost blind, but he knew as well as anyone in the room that he was going to lose his kind old friend, and from time to time he gave a low, piteous moan of pain. On the other side of the bed was the nurse, who rose as they entered the room, and Allan went round immediately and took her chair beside the bed.

Gilchrist, after a few ineffectual efforts to get his breath, said, in a low voice,

‘ This is kind o’ ye, my lady and Maister Rūchard. I hope I hae na’ disturbit ye, sir, but I was feart I’d mebbe no see the sun rise ony mair, so I jist wanted tae see ye and say good-bye.’

Richard made some common-place remark about hoping that he would live for a long time yet, knowing in his heart as he said it that the time had come, and that the Reaper had come to claim his own. Gilchrist answered, in a feeble voice and low,

‘Na, na, sir. My time has come, and I am ready to go. Ay, Maister Ruchard, your faither was a wee, wee laddie when I first cam’ here, and I hae served your hoose for nigh upo’ seventy year. I hae seen fower ginerations o’ ye, and mebbe this yun ’ll no be the warst o’ them;’ and as he said it, he stretched out his other hand towards Allan, who took it and wept silently over it.

The tears were streaming down Mrs. Innes’s face, and even Reid’s eyes were glistening suspiciously. After a time he spoke again.

‘Noo, sir, I want tae ask ye tae do me one favour: will ye gie the place to M’Evoy? He’s a guid lad. I hae trained him mysel’, and he’s auld eneuch tae be stiddy noo.’

Innes promised that M’Evoy should have the place, and then Gilchrist turned to Allan, who was now sobbing bitterly.

‘Dinna greet, my bairnie, dinna greet;

we maun a' dee, and I hae passed my time these fifteen year. Ye'll tak care o' auld Rover for me, will ye no, Maister Awllan ? It'll no be lang, I'm thinkin', afore I'll mebbe see him agen ' (perhaps he thought that 'in a better world his faithful dog would bear him company').

Allan tried to say that Rover's remaining days should be spent in luxury and idleness, but his emotion was too much for him, and he put his head down on the bed and sobbed aloud. Gilchrist laid his hand upon Allan's head, and speaking low he said, first having looked towards Mrs. Innes,

' Ye'll no mind my saying this, sir ; ' and then turning to Allan, ' I hae na been muckle i' the kirk since I was a wee bit laddie; what wi' the ferretin' and the poachers and the puppies, I hae na had ower muckle time, but I mind me fine ance, it'll be fifty year syne, ane o' they preachin'-fellies sayin' doon i' the wee kirk awa ower the burn yonder, " Honour thy

faither and thy mither, that thy days may be lang i' the land," and I thocht to mysel', weel, that's one o' the maist sensible things I iver heard ane o' they fellies say, and I have aye minded me o' that, and I think, Maister Awllan, a bairn canna dae better than jist follie that sayin'?

After this long effort, he gasped for breath, and the nurse offered him some restorative, but he put it away with his hand and said,

'Na, na, my time has come. I dinna need ony mair meat.' He raised his right hand from off the dog's head, and, holding it towards Richard, said, 'Good-bye, sir, and my lady, good-bye; auld Blairavon's safe wi' you and the bairnie here.' Then a convulsive shudder passed over his frame, and he half-rose in bed and cried, with a loud voice and clear, 'Rover, good dog—seek dead!' and sank on his pillows once more, and his good old white head fell forward on his breast.

They led Allan weeping from the room; and he and George walked slowly and in silence down to the house. The others soon followed.

They buried him near the family vault of the Inneses, and there on the mound of fresh-cut sods old Rover took up his station. While Gilchrist lay dead in his cottage Rover had whined and moaned in his grief incessantly, and had resolutely refused either to leave his old master's side, or to take food except from the hand that would never again pass caressingly over his silken head. He followed the coffin to the churchyard, and watched with his poor half-blind eyes the grave being slowly filled in. When it was finished, he quietly lay down on the little mound of earth and absolutely refused to move. They brought him food and water—he never touched the food, but occasionally he would lap some water—and in three days he had gone to

join his friend in the land we know not of.

Rover's death occurred two days before the end of the holidays, and it was with a sad and heavy heart that Allan went back to school.

CHAPTER XVII.

‘When all the world is young, lad, and all the trees are green.’

THREE years later. On the road which approaches Lochinver, in Sutherland, from the south, and about four miles from Lochinver itself, three figures might have been seen strolling along arm-in-arm, one glorious August evening in 1880. The sun was just setting in blood-red magnificence behind the Lewis, and showing them up like a jagged purple streak on the horizon. The sea was rolling softly and lazily in, falling and moaning rather than dashing against the beach. In front of them Suilvein reared his lofty crest as though he were envious of the two or three fleecy clouds which floated just above his head.

Everything was at peace. Even the dogs had forgotten to bark. Perhaps they thought it was Sunday, since everything was so quiet, and of course no dog, with any pretension to manners, barks on Sunday in the Highlands. But then it could not be Sunday, because it was too late to go to church, and no man would be so wicked as to go for a walk on the Sabbath, save for that purpose. Behind the first three figures came two gillies carrying salmon rods and fishing-baskets. The man in the middle of the three walking in front said, regretfully,

‘So it is a case of good-bye to Lussburgh, George.’

The speaker was the head-master of Lussburgh. It being warm, he wore nothing but a shirt, a pair of grey flannel trousers and shoes. His companions were attired similarly.

‘Yes, sir, I am sorry to say it is, and the thing I regret most is that I shall lose

you, if you don't mind my saying so, and Allan here.'

George and Allan had been invited by the head-master to spend a month with him at what he called his palace in the North. They had also been there for a week in the previous year. The palace consisted of four rooms, two on the ground floor and two above. The kitchen and sitting-room were below and the bed-rooms above. The bed-rooms were excellent so far as the beds went. One could sleep comfortably, for that matter, on a pile of stones, or in a third class carriage on the Highland Railway after a day in the Sutherland air. But somehow or other the roof of the palace was not good, that is to say it was good enough if you were not particular on the subject of roofs. This roof was not one of your common things with lathe and plaster, and slates in regular order all over it. It disdained such mundane things as lath and plaster,

and the slates were arranged with more regard for the picturesque than for order. You might have as many as ten all together, and then a gap of two or three, then half-a-dozen or so, and so on. It was very airy—but when a thunderstorm came on, it was better to take refuge under the bed, unless you had a predilection for a cold bath in the middle of the night. Of course, if one preferred a midnight shower-bath, the house was literally perfect. Allan was silent, and thinking moreover of his dinner, and not in any way of George's departure. He was ravenously hungry, having subsisted from seven in the morning till then—eight at night—on two captain biscuits. His dreams of food were interrupted by the head-master saying,

‘ You will be sorry, at any rate, that George is leaving.’

‘ Oh yes, but he knows that without my saying so, and besides we shall not exactly lose sight of one another, because you see

we live quite close together, and I shall be going up to St. Peter's next year.'

The head-master sighed and said,

'I suppose you will.' Then after a minute or two he continued, 'Somehow or other there seems to have been a softer, kindlier tone at Lussburgh for the last three or four years, and I am almost afraid we shall lose it again when you two and Lang and Henderson and Porteous leave. But it is always the way. One thinks, on looking forward, that there are no boys who can possibly fill up the gaps that have been left, and yet they always turn up, so don't you go away under the impression that you are indispensable, my young friend, because you ain't.'

Allan laughed at this, and George said 'he never supposed he was.'

In the meantime the two gillies who were walking behind, Donald and Murdoch M'Leod were discussing the fishing prospects for the next day.

‘He wull pe for havin’ ta whole watter ta morn, Tonalt,’ said Murdoch.

‘She’ll no pe for sayin’ but what he wull not,’ said Donald.

‘Was you seein’ ta sun set, Tonalt? She wull no pe fery goot for ta feesh ta morn, whatefer. She hat green round her belly, which is not goot for ta feesh.’

‘Maype, Murdo,’ said Donald, ‘she was not seein’ her go down, but *he* wull haf a feesh whatefer—if there was *no* watter, he would haf a feesh;’ and as he spoke he pointed the butt of the rod he was carrying, towards the head-master.

Murdoch wagged his head in assent. This man must have been the identical person whom the author of ‘Killaloe’ had in his mind’s eye when he composed the words of that intellectual ditty. Murdoch’s features had literally changed places with one another, and moreover the said features were in themselves more or less patchy.

It had happened on this wise. One night, some years before, Murdoch had gone up to the top of the house which the Duke of Sutherland was building at Lochinver (it has been turned into an hotel now) ‘to see ta view from ta top.’ Report sayeth not, but I think that Murdoch must have had ‘a drappie in his ee.’ Be that as it may, when he reached the top, by means of ladders and planks, he lost his footing and fell right down through the various scaffoldings. A terrible fall. Shortly afterwards he was picked up looking ‘like anything but a man.’ His face was battered out of all ‘recognition, and his limbs appeared all more or less broken. They carried him up to Strathan, and put him in his coffin, and proceeded to mourn his loss with tears and whisky. When the grey mists of morning, dispelled by the rays of the rising sun, were just beginning to lift from the valleys, and when the grief was less

violent, as the whisky was nearly all spent, a feeble voice from the coffin murmured, ‘She will tak’ a gless neat, she’s not feelin’ fery well.’

In an instant mourning was turned into gladness. Those who, overcome by their sorrow, had fallen asleep on the floor, were wakened up, more whisky was brought, and with it a doctor who said that Murdoch might recover with great care. He did recover, but his beauty was spoilt for ever, and when he spoke his voice seemed to come from the side of his head. His brother Donald was a magnificent specimen of a Highlander. It is always a mystery how these men turn out as they do. A Sutherland man’s food consists almost entirely of porridge. They are miserably housed, and have to endure all kinds of hardships, and a terrible winter. It must be a case of the survival of the fittest. Only the very strongest children can live at all. Donald, with his

hard, stern face and iron grey hair, looked as though he could carry a horse, and I do not doubt but that he could.

On reaching the Palace they found Bella M'Leod, the sister of the two gillies, dishing up the dinner.

'Just in time, sir,' she said to Allan.

'We always seem to be just in time, Bella, at whatever hour we come,' said Allan aloud, and then he added inwardly, 'How on earth does she do it? I believe she scents us from afar.'

After dinner Allan knew that the head-master would want to talk to George, as it was practically the last night which he would have with him, as on the following night George would have to turn in early in order to catch the coach to Lairg on the next morning. Allan yawned, stretched himself, looked at the bookshelf and fingered a book or two. Then he thought he would go to bed; but no, it was too early for that, so he went outside and

played with a collie pup for a time, and then he thought he would write to his mother.

So Allan wrote to his mother. That is to say, he wrote the heading, yawned, and went to bed. On the next day they went straight up to the head of the river to the Fall Pool, only two miles from the sea.

‘We will begin here and work down,’ said the head-master; ‘and I may fish one or two of the lower pools in the evening.’

They stood on a ledge of rock, all together, at the foot of the Fall Pool. Someone, somewhere, sings of the glories of Father Thames, the cradle of Freedom, and of the pride which leaps up in a man’s heart as he watches it sliding gently on past lawn and villa, town and meadow, till it finally spreads out to receive the ships of all the nations of the world. Very true. But for grandeur, for inspiration, for making a man feel his own littleness and meanness, for at the same time rous-

ing every noble thought that he is capable of in his better moments, for making him glad that he was born into the world, for causing his very heart to sing for joy, let him go a-fishing, or idling if he prefers it, among the glens of the North, and sit, feasting his soul, at the side of any one of a hundred foaming, gushing streams in bonnie Scotland. Who has ever seen anyone yet begin fishing at the Fall Pool on the Kirkaig without first stopping for some time to gaze at the mass of peat-stained water hurling over and through the cutting it has gradually made, in the course of ages, in the solid rock, and dashing itself into curdling foam at the foot? And then the pool itself! Black and oily, whose depth superstitious folk say no one knows. At the bottom of this pool of Tartarean blackness, men say the huge salmon lie which come lazily to the surface and take an idle sniff at the fly, and, with a sidelong glance at the stupid angler

at the end of the rod and a sigh of contempt, slip gently down to the bottom once more. These sages are known as Samsons, and foolish people say that, were one hooked, the rash fisherman would be carried down to the bottom of the pool, there to sleep for ever, or (this with bated breath) to wander through Stygian darkness to the gates of the lower world. But these be idle tales.

At the tail of the pool the black water turns into a deep, rich brown ; and, gathering pace as it goes, dashes through narrows and rocks, and comes foaming and spouting down in fury to the Hazel Pool. Here it pauses, and stops to toy with the grass and wild flowers, the ox-eyes and the heather-bells that fringe its banks. Then flowing on once more, and singing as it flows, it glides into the Otter Pool. To the Arrow it whispers of Fewin and Veaytie, and pleasant places among the hills. To the Bow it tells of mighty Canisp and

Ben More, and the wild, rugged peaks, and the red deer among the purple heather.

And so, now raging and tossing, now softly smiling, it wanders on, till finally it babbles over the pebbles to the sea.

George fished on steadily all the morning. He thought he had a rise at the Hazel Pool, but Murdoch said, ‘It wull be ta swirl in ta watter.’ He had a rise with a vengeance at the Otter Pool, and hooked a big fish (the fish do not run large in the Kirkaig). On the right bank of the pool there is a ledge of rock. On this Murdoch stood, ready with his gaff: George, having thoroughly tired his fish, brought him in to Murdoch. Now Murdoch was an excellent gillie, with the exception of one great fault, and that was that he always became too much excited when the time for gaffing came. He made a dart at the fish too soon, with the result that he did not get the gaff fairly in, and the fish slipped off it and lay on the ledge of rock.

‘Coot Cot! Murdo, ye’ll lost her!’ screamed Donald, from the bank above. To make matters worse, Murdoch completely lost his head, and in his excitement began making furtive dabs at the fish as it lay on the rock. This made Donald literally mad. With a yell of ‘Ta feesh wull be scaured like a grilled herrin’, he rushed down the bank and snatched the gaff out of Murdoch’s hand—just too late. The fish slid slowly off the rock into the pool again. Luckily the hook held, and, after the salmon had made one final rush to the strong water for liberty, George brought him in to the ledge of rock, and Donald soon had him high and dry on the bank.

Murdoch smiled from somewhere near his left ear, and said,

‘A ponny feesh; she was feart to lost her, whatefer.

Donald merely gave him one look of silent scorn and tapped the fish on the head.

As they stood beside the river in the evening, George looked up over the gurgling splashing stream and sighed.

‘Why do you look so sad, George?’ said Allan.

‘I was thinking that this was the very last of my boyhood. I go up next month for Smalls, and then I shall be a university man, I suppose.’

‘Well, George,’ said the head-master, ‘I don’t think you could find in the whole world a prettier place to bury your boyhood in.’

George said no, and then added musingly,

‘I wonder if I shall always feel the same sort of awe at—well, at this sort of thing as I do now;’ and he threw out his arm in a comprehensive sort of way towards the river and the hills and the westering August sun. ‘I remember once, sir,’ he continued, looking up at the head-master, ‘last year, going one evening, just as it

was dusk, up to those little lochs on the other side of the Dog Loch, where you were fishing with Donald. I tried to fish for a bit, and then the solemnity of those great black hills quite did for me. I don't think I was afraid, but I couldn't fish. I felt so miserably small among those silent mountains.'

'I went there once too,' broke in Allan, 'and I was in a beastly funk. I never thought of the hills. I left in a hurry, and was jolly glad to meet old daft Davis out for a ramble.'

'You always were a dreamy sort of person, George,' said the head-master, 'and those sort of feelings come to most people, I fancy, but with you they have come sooner than usual. You have always been older than your years, but Allan here is and always was a mere boy.'

'Time enough to be old when the time comes,' said Allan.

'Quite true,' said the head-master, 'the

longer you keep your boy's heart, the happier you will be.'

Next day George did not go by the mail-cart to Lairg, but waited for the steamer which was going down to Greenock. Across the Minch, loathed of travellers, to Stornoway; down the west coast of Scotland; in and out of the sea lochs; past Skye and the islands where Ossian sang his songs of love and war far away in the long-forgotten past; and so on round the Mull into the Clyde. He must indeed be a fastidious man who wishes for any finer sight than is afforded by this journey, if the weather be only fine. It is perhaps at its best towards the latter end of August, when the hills are one vast sea of blooming heather.

George saw the sun dip like a ball of fire into the sea, and then turning to the shore he watched the purple deepen on the hills till it was almost black. There is perhaps nothing quite like that full

rich purple which one sees in the early twilight in Scotland. The Ross-shire hills ‘like sleeping kings’ stood out clear against the sky, and, as the light faded, the glens and cliffs gradually melted into one another till, when the last sea-bird was hurrying to its resting-place for the night, form and colour slowly disappeared, and they became one dark formless mass, to sleep until they were wakened and clothed with new beauty by the sun, as he kissed their crests at early dawn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'Our life is carried with too strong a tide.'

WOULD anybody in the world care to face his life, if he could see all the trouble that he would have to meet and combat put before him, as it were, in one piece? Probably not. They say that troubles never come singly. That may possibly be true, but they certainly do not *all* come together. If one *could* see all the trouble of one's life beforehand, most men would say, 'Death is better than this, I cannot face it.' Luckily it is spread over a long period. If you had asked Allan Innes that question as he stood on the platform at Paddington on the 13th of October in

the year 1881, he would not have listened to you, in all probability, and if he had, he would have laughed in your face.

What did he care for trouble in the future ? He would not have believed that it would come, even if he had seen it laid before him.

He had just come down from Scotland, after celebrating George's twenty-first birthday in the previous week, and he was going up for his first term at St. Peter's. No boy ever lived yet whose heart did not swell with joy and pride at the thought of going up to Oxford or Cambridge for the first time. Emancipation from the trammels of school, however pleasant that school life may have been, is always a source of delight to a boy, though many a time in later years he would give five years of his life to have a boy's heart and hope and pleasures again—for a week, for a day, yes, even for an hour ; just to feel innocent, happy, enthusiastic, hopeful

once more. Was he not a man now? If not in the eyes of the world, at least in the eyes of other 'men' at the university. Moreover, he was going up with what was known as 'a reputation from school.' We live in an age of athleticism, and its heroes are more or less worshipped by its votaries. There are many who say that the universities are becoming mere hotbeds to foster this national madness. One would not for a moment sacrifice knowledge to muscle, nor does this occur, except in rare instances, at the universities. Knowledge is nothing if one have not health.

Allan had been captain of Lussburgh at football and cricket, and now he was going up to Oxford with health and spirits, a good allowance, and the promise of a fair inheritance in his later years. What could a boy in his position want more? There were no thoughts of the morrow. The world looked very fair indeed to him on this autumn afternoon. But it

'was the world of fancy : the realities of life did not trouble him much. As he was standing on the platform thinking of nothing at all—a very favourite occupation of his, by the way—George Anstruther came up to him (they had travelled down together the previous night), and said,

' Come on, Allan, we must hurry up, or we won't get a seat in the train. This is the train which most men affect.'

They got into a carriage, which speedily filled up with other St. Peter's men, to whom George introduced Allan, who was as proud at that time to know one or two of the men whose deeds of prowess he had read of in the *Sportsman*, as he would have been to be Prime Minister, or the Grand Mogul, or Bishop of Rumtifoo, or any other celebrated historical character. Their talk was all of who was going to get into the eight, and what sort of football team the university were going to have, and the sport they had had in the vacation, which

is surely better and healthier, though not very intellectual possibly, than the lewd tales that the young generation of some nations spend their spare time in relating.

Allan had never been in Oxford before, and as he drove from the station and caught a glimpse of Christ Church on his right as he passed Carfax, and St. Mary's Cathedral on his left as he drove down the High, he gave a great gasp of joy that this was to be his home for four years to come.

As is usual in most colleges, he found that St. Peter's was practically divided up into three sets. There were the steady, gentlemanly men, of whom George was a prominent member; the wild, dare-devil set; and the men who in university language are known as 'smugs,' that is to say, men who are presumed to read very hard, take no exercise, and to 'commit fearful excesses on tea' and muffins in the afternoon. Allan with his high spirits and good

nature was quite willing to be in all these sets if necessary. One afternoon, however, happening to overhear one of the aforesaid ‘smugs’ saying to another of his tribe in the quadrangle, ‘Will you come to a Plato tea in my rooms this afternoon?’ he came to the conclusion that that was hardly in his line; so from that time he eschewed the ‘smugs,’ not because he despised them, but simply because he did not feel up to the intellectual conversation which he felt sure must be carried on at a Plato tea. The young bucks at Oxford and Cambridge are often surprised to find, in after life, however, that So-and-So of St. Andrew’s College, Oxford or Cambridge, as the case maybe, has been elected to some high office, and they rack their brains and say, ‘Funny thing, I don’t know the name, and yet he must have been up in my time.’ So he was, but then he was one of those ‘smugs’ whom ‘nobody knew, you know.’ These ‘smugs’ pass their time very quietly and

profitably at the university, and they very quietly work their way up in the world, while the men who ‘didn’t know those sort of people, you know,’ find themselves left in the lurch. It is after all merely a question of fashion. If by any wild possibility it should ever become the fashion at our great seats of learning for all men to work, well then the ‘smugs’ will be in the ascendant, and the pure athletes will be those persons ‘whom nobody knows, you know.’

Among the quiet, steady-going men, who neither made a parade of their reading nor of their athletic skill, Allan got on exceedingly well, thanks to his friendship with George, whom everybody, with the exception of the very fast men, seemed to like and respect. But the fast set had an irresistible temptation for Allan : the men who passed their time in racing, hunting, cricket, racquets, drinking, and other things which are perhaps as well left un-

mentioned: men who were constantly rushing off to Newmarket and London, from whose rooms sounds of revelry were wont to issue in the small hours of the morning. These men were constantly getting into trouble with the dons. They would appear twice or thrice a week at chapel in the morning, with dishevelled hair, red about the eyes, in battered caps and torn gowns. There was one man in particular with whom Allan seemed inclined to be on excellent terms, and whom George disliked intensely. His name was Thomas—a Welshman, very rich, who was the king of the fast set. He was a small, thin man, with a very evil aspect. He had reddish-brown hair, a foxy, narrow face, a small red moustache, very heavy red-brown eyebrows, and small, keen, brown eyes set very near together. Perhaps it is hardly fair to judge a man by his eyes, and yet many people do so; it is certain that a man's eyes have to answer

for a very great deal. How often one hears the remark, ‘I don’t like his eyes,’ and yet the person so alluded to may be the most harmless creature in the world. And yet somehow or other one likes a man to look one in the face. It at least gives one the *idea* of sincerity. One always thinks that a man who cannot look you in the face has something to be ashamed of, and the man who can is either a very honest man or an exceedingly accomplished villain. Thomas’s conversation was literally garnished with profane oaths, some of them exceedingly strange and rare—in fact, he was an artist in this line, and prided himself on having the most extensive vocabulary in the whole university. It certainly was his only distinction. He would bet upon anything. He had been known to win money over the length of the hairs in the President’s dog’s tail. This man had been taken with Allan’s bright, cheery face when he

first came up, and George was much annoyed in consequence. One evening, after hall, Allan and George were strolling round the quadrangle, when George said,

‘ Why do you see so much of Thomas, Allan ? ’

‘ Oh, he isn’t a bad sort. His language is rather terrible at times, but he isn’t a bad fellow at heart, I think.’

‘ He is. He’s everything that is detestable. His language would frighten a Billingsgate fish-wife. He dresses like a Bank-holiday ’Arry. His morals are worse than his language. He’s the essence of everything that is low, brutal, and vulgar. What earthly good can you get out of the man ? He hasn’t an idea in his head, except on the subjects of what he is pleased to call “ girls ” and loo. The very sight of him almost turns me sick. I wish you would give him up.’

‘ But he’s asked me down to fish with him at Easter. He’s got a splendid place

in Breconshire, I am told, and some of the best water on the Usk.'

'I hope sincerely you won't go.'

'I said I thought I couldn't when he asked me.'

'No, don't go; you had much better come up to Ardarrochar at Easter.'

'All right. I'll chuck Thomas.'

This was at the end of Allan's first term, and, to tell the truth, he was already getting tired of the very fast set. Their amusements which were low, their conversation, and their general propensity to destroy their own and other people's property palled on Allan after a time. He had been taken up by the senior men in a marvellous way. By the end of the term he found that he had lost a great deal of money at *loo*, and had done absolutely no work, and had already run considerably into debt, and he came to the conclusion that he must '*steady the boat*' a little. An excellent resolution, which went to

join its companions in other climes. He had, at any rate, justified his ‘reputation.’ Two days before his conversation with George about Thomas, he had been chosen to play against Cambridge at Rugby football. He had at least gained experience, if nothing else, during his first term at Oxford: and he resolutely made up his mind, for the time being, at any rate, to turn over a new leaf.

Among the excursions he took during that term was one to Newmarket, along with about a dozen other men of the sporting set. They had ordered a saloon carriage, and were going to ‘do the thing in style,’ so they said. Doing the thing in style amounted to taking with them a breakfast which consisted mainly of champagne. When they got to the station, they were told that there was no saloon carriage for them, as one could not be procured in time. This caused loud murmurings, and Thomas in particular was giving the porter

and the few passengers the benefit of his extensive education in profanity.

'Look here, sir,' he said to a porter, 'just give the station-master my compliments—Mr. Thomas of Peter's—and tell him that I should like to see him at once.'

In a few minutes the station-master appeared, and Thomas broke out with,

'What the devil does this mean? Is this the way to treat gentlemen? We have ordered a saloon carriage, and it isn't here. I suppose you don't sport one on this . . . line.'

The station-master turned his back on Thomas, and said, very politely,

'I am exceedingly sorry, gentlemen, that this should have happened, but it really is not my fault. You only sent notice last night at five o'clock, and, although I telegraphed to several places, I found that it was quite impossible to get one here by this time in the morning.'

‘You ought to keep one here,’ burst out Thomas.

The station-master, still ignoring Thomas, then said,

‘But I will see that two first-class compartments are reserved for you right through to Cambridge.’

The men thanked him and got into the train—Thomas and the wilder spirits into one compartment, and the others, among whom was Allan, into another. Two or three stations out of Oxford Thomas looked into the other compartment and said,

‘Look here, you fellows, this is all d——d nonsense. We can’t breakfast apart like this. I am going to make a saloon carriage.’

Sure enough, when the train started again, the men in Thomas’s compartment began to batter at the partition with such goodwill that in under ten minutes it was all smashed down. They made use of the wreckage as a table, and had their break-

fast in peace. After they had finished breakfast, one man said,

‘There’ll be the devil to pay for this, Thomas.’

‘Who cares?’ said Thomas. ‘We’ll make that dunderheaded old fool of a station-master responsible.’

But they did not. When they arrived at Oxford in the evening they were met by the station-master, who said,

‘Now, gentlemen, you may take your choice, either you give me a promise, in writing, to pay for those compartments by to-morrow evening, or I put the whole matter in the proctor’s hands at once.’

At this most of the men looked very uncomfortable, and one man said,

‘I have been completely cleaned out at Newmarket. Well—I suppose it only means more money from the Jews. I can’t afford to be sent down, because my old governor would turn me out of doors if he knew how I was going on here.’

Thomas said that they had better pay, and though well able to pay the whole amount, some eighty pounds, himself, he made no offer to pay more than his own share, though he had been the instigator of the damage, and, in fact, the chief delinquent in carrying it out. They promised to pay, and left the station, not feeling very happy. This is perhaps not quite the sort of life that fond parents expect their sons to lead at the university. Men are very apt to forget the follies of their own youth, and to express disgust and amazement at the same faults in their children which they had committed themselves. Good advice is very cheap, and many fathers fancy that good advice amounts to imperative commands.

On the night after Allan's visit to Newmarket, the same men, with one or two exceptions, met at dinner at a man called Pulteney's rooms in the High, where those who had lost at Newmarket sought to

mend matters by playing shilling unlimited loo with most of the honours turned up each round. An interesting and instructive game. Good for the temper, too. But if Dame Fortune be pleased to turn away her pretty head, and persistently refuse to smile on one, one finds that an allowance of three or four hundred a-year does not go very far. The host, Pulteney, was a very quick-tempered man, especially when he had imbibed too freely of strong waters. His usually irascible temper was not improved by the fact that he was losing heavily. He was a small, flabby man who wore an eyeglass constantly, which caused him to screw up his face in an unpleasant manner. At 11.30 they were just about to stop.

‘Stop at the next division,’ said Pulteney.

‘Good thing for you too,’ said a man called Atherley, who was sitting next to him, in a good-natured tone.

'What the devil's that to do with you,' said Pulteney, losing his temper utterly now, and only too eager for a row. 'I pass.'

'You needn't lose your hair about it,' said Atherley. 'Three, three, two, that's all right. Toss you for a sovereign, Innes.'

The men rose and were going out, saying 'Good-night' to Pulteney as they went. Pulteney, however, took no notice of them, but glancing at Atherley said, 'I won't be insulted in my own rooms.'

'My dear fellow, don't make an ass of yourself. I made a perfectly innocent remark—in good faith—and you have chosen to take it as an insult. I didn't intend to insult you.'

Allan who was just going out of the door said to the man with him,

'Hadn't we better wait, Atherley will smash him if he loses his temper.'

'Oh, no,' said the other man, 'better let them have it out. Atherley won't lose

his temper. He only does that about once a century, but I must say he is rather dangerous when he does. He lives next door, and we must hurry back to college. He's all right.'

They had just got downstairs and were in the passage leading to the street when they heard a crash, and they hurried into the street to see what was going on. They saw through the open window on the first floor Atherley and Pulteney wrestling, but soon Atherley had Pulteney down. He then sat on him, and soon rising carried him into his bed-room, locked him in, and then proceeded to hurl his furniture out of the window into the street.

He had apparently lost his temper.

They saw an arm-chair and a sofa come crashing though the window, and then a policeman came along to investigate matters, so they went arm-in-arm along the High back to college. This may seem very foolish and childish, but very foolish

and childish things do occur on most days at the great seats of learning.

It was after this that Allan came to the conclusion that he would give up the fast set—and he did, more or less—but the habit of idleness clung to him, to a certain extent, through nearly all his college life.

CHAPTER XIX.

Matre pulcra filia pulerior.

AFTER the match against Cambridge, Allan came home to find a merry Christmas party assembled, including Lady Grizel and George who, however, was going home immediately after Christmas : he was madly in love with Amy, who was now nearly eighteen and had grown into a glorious brunette with wavy brown hair and dark brown eyes. She was still indifferent to George, in this way, that she regarded him as a most charming companion, but the idea of love had literally never entered her head in connection with him. After all it is exceedingly rare that a boy and girl who have practically grown

up together, ever fall in love with one another. They never seem to think about it. With George it was different. He had given away his heart almost from the first, and his boyish admiration had grown into a strong and steadfast love, which he vowed to himself nothing in the world could change.

As they were walking home from church on the Sunday before Christmas, Lady Grizel and Allan were walking in front; Jack and old General Ainslie, an uncle of Richard's next, then George and Amy, and finally Mr. and Mrs. Innes. Jack was now a lively, inquisitive youth, fresh from his first term at Lussburgh. He was making the general tell him for the hundredth time the story of how he had won the Victoria Cross in the Mutiny. George was bending over Amy with a look half-reverence, half-longing, and Amy was talking gaily to him without the least notion of the battle that was going on

in his heart. Lady Grizel and Allan apparently had some private joke of their own, at which they were laughing merrily.

The park of Blairavon stretches right down to the river, and for convenience in going to church, and for the servants when they went to the village, a swing bridge had been erected at the foot of the park. This bridge had served Allan as an excellent instrument of torture for Francis in former days. From the bridge right up to the house, the path runs in between two rows of mighty elms. When they were half way up the path, Richard turned to his wife and said, looking towards George and Amy,

‘Do you see that, dear?’

‘Yes, Dick, I have seen it for a very long time. I first thought it was mere boyish fancy on his part, but I am now convinced that he is terribly in earnest.’

‘Well, Kate, I shall be very glad for Amy to have a man like George for a hus-

band. I don't think I ever saw a boy I liked so much as him. It is an uncommonly lucky thing for Allan, too, that he is up at Oxford with him, because I think Allan wants a little ballast, although I am sure there isn't much vice in him.'

'Yes, Dick, I should be very glad too, if Amy would marry George, but I hope he won't be in any hurry about it. She is very young yet, too young to know her own mind.'

'I don't think there is any fear of that. He is sure to come to me first, and if he does, I will tell him to wait a little. I think he would almost be reasonable on that point, and I never saw a man in love who was reasonable yet.'

That evening after dinner, when Allan and George and Amy had taken it into their heads to stroll down to the old castle in the moonlight (a very dangerous proceeding for a young lover who is not sure that his affection is returned), the others

were seated over the fire in the drawing-room. Jack had gone to bed. The general had been telling them that he thought there was going to be a row in Egypt. Old General Ainslie was one of the jolliest old soldiers that ever lived. He had spent almost his entire soldiering life in India, and had distinguished himself in every engagement that he had taken part in. He had just come home and retired after the disastrous, disgraceful performance with the Boers in the Transvaal. He had said ‘that he was old and old-fashioned, but would have liked to die in harness, if possible, yet he could not bear to see the honour of England trampled on and flung to the devil, sir, by that petticoated old—’ but we will not follow the general in his tirade against an eminent, though possibly misguided statesman, still living. From constant contact with natives in India, and rare intercourse with English ladies, his language was at times not

always as choice as it might have been. He was the soul of generosity, and as tender-hearted as a child. He was tall and rather stout, and had a ruddy, sun-tanned face, a glittering, steely eye, and a thick white moustache which hid his mouth. He had been complaining of gout the day before, and had said that it was quite time an old horse, such as he was, should think of changing his terrestrial, for a celestial or an infernal home. He had acquired a habit of expressing his thoughts aloud, especially when affected in any way, a habit which sometimes had disastrous results. He had only been in the house a few hours when Jack marked him for his own, a monopoly which was soon disputed by Amy and Allan, and in fact all who came in contact with him.

After remarking that there was going to be a row in Egypt, he suddenly turned round to Richard and said,

‘ Why don’t you send Allan into the

Army, Dick? Best thing for a young fellow of spirit. He can retire when he likes. It will give him an occupation, which he won't get mooning about here.'

'I don't intend him to moon about here, or anywhere else,' said Richard. 'Personally I wouldn't mind his going into the Army, but Kate won't allow that, so he is going to the Bar, I think. He wants to, and I shan't thwart him. I am a little anxious about him just now though. George tells me he's getting into a terribly fast set at Oxford, and although he and I are on terms of the utmost confidence, I don't care to tackle him on the point. That sort of thing is very apt to make a high-spirited boy go to the bad at once, especially if he thinks the remonstrance unjustifiable.'

'Pooh, pooh,' said the general, 'don't worry about him. Boys must have their fling. The morality of the young men of the present day, bad as it is, is not much

worse, I daresay, than it was in my time.'

'I daresay that's true, general, but still I am rather anxious about him. I think he would listen to you, Lady Grizel, more willingly than to anybody else.'

'I shall be very glad to talk to him, Mr. Innes, if you want me to,' said Lady Grizel, 'only I don't think you need be afraid of him ; you only have to look at his face, and you will find that there is not much wickedness there.'

'Quite true,' broke in the general ; 'it sometimes isn't fair to judge a man by his face, but, by George ! there is no mistake about Allan. There was a fellow once in the 160th, when I first joined, called Podder, whom everybody shunned, more or less. He looked as if he had committed every crime under the sun, and was quite willing to commit them again. He had a low, receding forehead ; small, bloodshot eyes ; a flat nose and a protruding chin ; and his hair looked as if it had been thrown

at his head, and had only stuck on in patches. Gad, he *was* ugly. Kate, you'll hardly believe me, but I was regularly afraid of that fellow. What with his name —fancy being called Podder!—and his appearance, I rarely managed to say more than “Good-morning” and “Good-night” to him. Well, one day—fearfully cold—about this time of year, when we were quartered at the castle in Edinburgh, I went for a long walk into the country, out past Craiglochhart, and when I was about four miles out I saw some one coming towards me carrying a bundle, which I soon saw was a child. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw that it was Podder. When I met him I saw that there were tears in his eyes. “What’s that, Podder?” I said. “I found this poor little beggar almost frozen to death in a ditch out there.” He had taken off his overcoat and wrapped it carefully round the child, and was quietly carrying him into Edin-

burgh. I turned and walked back with him, and after that he was one of my greatest friends. He turned out a splendid soldier. Poor fellow, he was killed in the Mutiny.' Just then the three young people came in, and the general turned round and said to Allan, ' All of which means, my young friend, that you must not judge people by appearances.'

The time wore on. They shot the covers and ferreted, and were happy, until it was time for Allan to go up to Oxford again. He had done no work, and the night before he went away Lady Grizel said to him,

' Allan dear, I hope you will get out of that horrid fast set in Oxford. You can get no good out of them, and you can get a good deal of harm. The longer you preserve your innocence the better and happier you will be.'

' Yes, Lady Grizel. I have made up my mind to cut that lot altogether, but it is very hard to choose one's friends properly

at the very start. I didn't really care for their society much, but they seemed to be the leading spirits in college; but I will promise you, Lady Grizel, that I won't have much more to do with them.'

' Thank you, my dear. Now, remember once more, Allan, that, when you are in trouble, you will always find me ready to help you. I wish I could leave you my money, but that goes to Somerton's cousin.'

' My dear Lady Grizel, you have always been kindness itself to me, and you may be quite sure that I shall never forget it. You have been almost a second mother to me.'

CHAPTER XX.

'A daughter of the gods, divinely tall
And most divinely fair.'

THEY had scarcely been up in Oxford a fortnight when George was summoned home by telegram, and in two days more Allan knew that 'Sir George Anstruther, Bart., of Ardarrochar, Ayrshire, had died of heart-disease, accelerated by violent excitement, caused by an encounter with a drunken collier.' So the paragraph ran in the *Times*, and Allan said to himself, 'That is our old friend of the bridge,' and he was right.

George came up again in the middle of term, and told Allan that he should take his degree, but would only stay up

three years instead of four as he had originally intended.

So the time passed on until the spring of 1883. George was going down in the summer. Allan had spent his time in sports and riding, in enjoying himself, in fact, according to his lights, but doing very little reading. The dons found it very difficult to be hard on him, and there was only one among them, a man called Winckworth, who had any real influence with him. He was a limp, gaunt creature, with soft grey eyes, which always looked as though they saw something far away in the dim past. He had a very quiet, dry way of speaking, a dreamy way as though he were talking to some one in another world. In the spring of 1883 Allan had received an invitation from Thomas, who had gone down in the previous summer, written from Monte Carlo, asking him to fish on his water on the Usk. He had said, ‘I am sorry I can’t put you up, because

my place is shut up, and I have to stay in the South of France till the beginning of June. I suppose I did racket a bit too much at the 'varsity, but I daresay I shall pull up again soon. I enclose a letter to the keeper giving him instructions. You'll only get trout, but if the weather's good and the water is in order, you will have ripping sport. Remember me to Anstruther. By the way, you had better take a friend with you. You will find it slow alone. Better put up at the Llwyn Bridge Hotel.'

Allan told George that Thomas wished to be remembered to him.

'He might have saved himself the trouble. I tell you I cordially detest and despise the man, if one can be said to detest a man for whom one has nothing but contempt. I am glad at any rate that he won't be there. You will be at least spared his disgusting language.'

'I think you are rather hard on him,

George, though I must say I am not sorry he is away.'

'Who will you take with you?'

'Oh, I am thinking of asking Prettyman,' said Allan. 'He is a good sort, and awfully keen on fishing, and I don't think he gets too much of it either. He's beastly hard up, poor chap.'

'You couldn't do better, since you *are* going; but I would do some reading if I were you, Allan. You have Mods. in summer, remember.'

'I shall only stay a fortnight, and then I am coming back to read like nuts here.'

'I daresay I shall be over at Blairavon once or twice,' said George. 'Shall I take any message for you to your sister Amy?'

Poor old George, he blushed as he said it, and Allan answered,

'Oh yes, give her my love and tell her to see that M'Evoy looks after my guns and that young setter pup. I am going to have her out in the autumn.'

So George went northward and Allan and his friend Prettyman went down into Wales.

When they got to the inn at Llwyn Bridge, they found that there was only one bed-room left vacant, with two beds in it, which they took, and after dinner they strolled out on to the bridge just in front of the inn, and watched the trout at their evening meal, and discussed the prospects of fishing on the morrow. It did not look very promising, as there was a bright clear sunset, and what little wind there was blew from the north-east. They turned in early, but Allan could not go to sleep. There was something wrong with the bed. It seemed as if the bedclothes were of a different kind from those which he had usually met with; they appeared to be instinct with life: in fact, Allan was experiencing what many thousands of people had experienced before, and which must

have been related before, but, as I have never read of any such incident in its exact nature, I will risk reiteration. If he had been in Spain, he would have been told that it was ; ‘ Nada, esta el tiempo de las pulgas ahora.’

It seemed as though armies of insects, millions upon millions of them, were advancing and retiring in battalions, in regular order all over his body. He rolled about and tossed and kicked, and I am sorry to say swore under his breath several times. Prettyman’s gentle breathing, moreover, proved that he was asleep, and this made Allan more angry than ever. There is nothing so annoying as to hear the placid breathing of a man asleep, when the jade refuses to visit one’s own eyelids.

After about two hours of this, Allan felt that he was just dropping off to sleep, when he was bitten in the tender part of the calf of his leg by something. There

was no doubt about it. With a loud yell he leapt out of bed and began hurriedly taking off his pyjamas.

Prettyman awoke at the shout, and sleepily said,

‘What the deuce is the matter, Innes ? You will wake the whole house, if you make that beastly noise.’

‘There’s something in my bed, and it has bitten me on the calf.’

‘What an infernal shindy to make about a flea,’ said Prettyman, sleepily. ‘One would think you had never seen one before. They swarm in these small Welsh inns. I could sleep if they were running over me in hundreds. Don’t make an ass of yourself, standing there naked examining your pyjamas in that way. You might le—a fell—’

A gentle snore proclaimed that Prettyman was asleep again. Allan carefully examined his clothes, and made sure that he was rid of the beast, hopped into bed

with a sigh of satisfaction, and was asleep in a few minutes. He thought that he had been asleep about twenty seconds when he woke with a start at a loud cry, and looking into the middle of the room, he saw Prettyman doing exactly the same thing as he had done himself an hour or so before.

‘What’s the row, Prettyman? What a fuss to make about a flea,’ said Allan, wickedly. ‘I wish you’d let a man sleep in peace.’

Prettyman growled out something which is not found in the best English grammars, and after a long hunt he caught and slaughtered the animal, and they slept in peace till the morning.

The next day they agreed that Prettyman should go down the river and Allan up; so they started at about eight o’clock. It was a bright, sunny day, the water was low, and a coldish wind was blowing: not a promising day. Allan, using the finest

tackle, fished with great care and caution all the way up the stream, and had only got a dozen small trout by one o'clock. He sat down on the bank and ate his sandwiches, and looked up at a bridge about fifty yards above him. Above the bridge there was a lovely little piece of shallow rough water at the tail of a dark pool, and Allan said to himself,

‘ There’s a big one or two lying at the edge of that stream, I’ll bet ; and if I wait for half-an-hour, till the shadow of the bridge reaches that shallow piece, I’ll have a shot at you, my friends.’

After smoking a contemplative pipe, he waded slowly up till he was about fifteen yards above the bridge, and proceeded to cast carefully across the pool. No result for the first half-dozen casts. At the next cast, just as his tail-fly touched the water at the edge of the rough part, there was a rush and a dash at the fly.

‘ Missed him, by George !’ muttered

Allan. He cast again with the same result. At the third attempt he hooked him. ‘Aha,’ he said, as the trout made for the strong water at the head of the pool, ‘here’s a trout at last.’

He had to be careful, as his tackle was very fine: after five or six minutes, he drew the trout gently on to a little sloping sandbank at the side of the pool, and as he did so he heard a girl’s voice say,

‘Oh, mother, he’s got it.’

At this he looked up, and there was a smile on his face. Seeing two ladies on the bridge looking down at him, he took off his cap, at which the younger of the two blushed and turned away her head, but not before Allan had taken in every feature of her face.

‘Jove! that’s the prettiest girl I have seen in my life,’ he said to himself. ‘I wonder who she can be?’

What he had seen was a tall girl of about seventeen, with a perfect oval face,

large violet eyes, a delicate aquiline nose, and the most magnificent coils of golden hair, a small mouth, and slightly protruding chin.

‘I wonder who she can be?’ he said again. ‘Looks as if she would have her own way, too.’

His trout weighed nearly a pound-and-three-quarters, and he was quite pleased so far with his day’s work. But after that his fishing suffered considerably. After missing about ten trout in succession, he got rather angry.

‘Hang it! here am I day-dreaming again, instead of fixing my attention on fishing.’

Try as he would, he could not get that sweet face out of his head. At last, about five o’clock, he gave it up in despair, took down his rod, and went back to the inn.

‘What a fool I am!’ he mused. ‘Spoilt a whole afternoon’s fishing, because I happened to see an uncommonly pretty face. It is a thousand to one I shall never see

her again. Bah ! she probably has a bad temper, or bites her little sister, or something.'

In the evening Prettyman came in with the skin peeling off his nose, very tired, very hungry, and very happy.

' Well, Innes, what did you get ?'

' Oh, only a few small ones, and a decent fellow about a pound-and-three-quarters.'

' I got three dozen and a half, and they must weigh about twenty pounds, I should think. I've had a glorious day. There are some splendid runs down in the wood below the bend. If the water were in better order, I could make a first-rate basket down there ; my biggest is hardly three-quarters-of-a-pound, though. They are a very level lot. But what's the matter, old man ? You look down in the mouth.'

' Yes, my afternoon was quite spoilt. I saw a pretty girl looking over the bridge just after I got that big fellow, and I

couldn't get her face out of my head.'

Prettyman burst out laughing.

' Got the fever at first sight, have you, Innes? Sorry for you. What was she? —a buxom Welsh milkmaid? Some of these Welsh country girls are very pretty down here.'

Allan looked up at him, and said,

' Prettyman, do you know that sometimes you are inconceivably vulgar?'

At which Prettyman laughed again, and said,

' I didn't know it was as bad as that.' He then saw that Allan was getting angry, so he stopped laughing, and said, ' I am sorry if I have annoyed you, Innes, but you must confess it sounds a little ridiculous.'

' You are quite right, old cock,' said Allan, ' and I am a double-dyed ass.' With which he went to wash before dinner.

The next day was Sunday, one of those perfect days which come so rarely in April,

prophets of a summer that too often never comes in England. Instead of going to a stuffy little church to hear an illiterate Welsh parson whine out the most beautiful form of prayer in the world, and preach about the horrors of eternal fire, they went and sat in the wood close down to the water's edge.

'I think this is the prettiest time of the whole year,' said Allan, 'the very early spring. Look at the sun shining through those limes over there; one never gets those soft delicate tints of green at any other time. In summer one has to content oneself with a vast green mass, the eye is filled with it, and it is impossible to mark the soft beauty of separate bits as one can in spring. It is a pity that it only lasts for about a fortnight at most—and yet I suppose one would get tired of it, if it lasted any longer. Summer to my mind is like a great, red-cheeked, comely country girl, and spring like the refined beauty of a well-bred woman.'

Prettyman looked at Allan for a short time before answering, and then he said,

‘ You are a rum fellow, Innes ; if anybody were to meet you casually among Thomas’s old set, they would put you down as a coarse, unimaginative sort of person ; and yet when a man comes to know you, he finds that all that sort of wild devilry is about as far separated from your real self as the Poles.’

‘ My dear Prettyman, it is a truism to say that every man or woman in this world has a double nature. Most people would be very angry if you told them so, but it is nevertheless true. One nature is that which we put on with our clothes in the morning and which all the world sees, and by that nature a man is judged. The other is his real nature which none but his most intimate friends ever see, and even they but rarely. Men, when they wear this nature show what they really are—we are not in college hall, and I

shall not be sconced, so I will quote Greek, *έαντοὺς ἐμφανίζουσιν οἵτινες εἰσὶν*. In fact, I doubt if anyone knows a man's real nature except his wife, and then only when they live in the most perfect mutual confidence. Now there is nothing I love better than this: to be amidst beautiful scenery either fishing or shooting with a friend—far, far away from everything that can trouble one in any way. I think one only really and honestly worships one's Maker at such a time as this.' Then he ceased for a time and muttered to himself. Then he raised himself on one elbow and pointed with his other hand, and yet all the time he seemed merely to be thinking aloud. 'Look, man, look around you; look up there at the little fall splashing over the rocks; look below you at the water winding in and out among the stones, with the shimmer of the sun upon it; truly God's earth is a fair place. Fancy being in church to-day.—Look at the river

far away round the bend, laughing and dancing past the waving reeds ; look at the tender leaves at the top of the limes there, shivering in the breeze ; look at the blue sky above you, and the young grass springing at your feet.—Fancy sitting between four bare plastered walls to-day and listening to bad English falling from the lips of a man whose real duty in life ought to consist in tending cows. Most of the Welsh parsons are small farmers' sons, who pick up a smattering of education and then marry in their own station of life usually for money, and are then set to teach their fellow-creatures the way of truth and of life. It is absurd.—One worships God when one loves the flowers and the streams and the hills that He has made.—One can't feel wicked in a place like this.—Yes, many people go to church, but few “to kneel and worship God.”—All outward adoration of something we cannot conceive must be wrong.

—It can only exist in the heart, therefore should be in secret.—The pure love of an honest man for a pure woman is one of the highest acts of worship of which a man is capable.—He worships the noblest creation of God, and in so doing worships the Creator himself.—Yes, there are many beautiful things in this fair earth, but there is nothing more beautiful under the sun than a beautiful, pure, English girl. By Jove, Prettyman, I'm sorry—I have either been preaching or talking nonsense, probably both.'

'On the contrary,' said Prettyman, very quietly, 'you have been doing neither—you have been talking uncommon good sense, and have opened my eyes considerably. You are a rum soul, Innes, as I said before, and, by gad, I am glad I came here with you. You have made me like and respect you more than I should have done in a hundred terms at Oxford.'

'I often go rambling on like that, you

must not mind me. Come along, old cock, let's go and have some lunch.'

They fished on for a fortnight. Prettyman with excellent results, but Allan never seemed to get much of a basket. He always seemed to keep somewhere near that bridge where he had seen the girl whose face he could not forget. On the last day of their stay he came along the road musing to himself.

' I wonder if there is such a thing as love at first sight. Somehow or other I have never cared before whether I saw a girl again or not, but with this one it is quite different. What an ass I am after all! I shall forget her after a week at Oxford. At any rate, I don't remember having spent such a jolly time before. Prettyman's a good soul. I wish he were not going down in summer.'

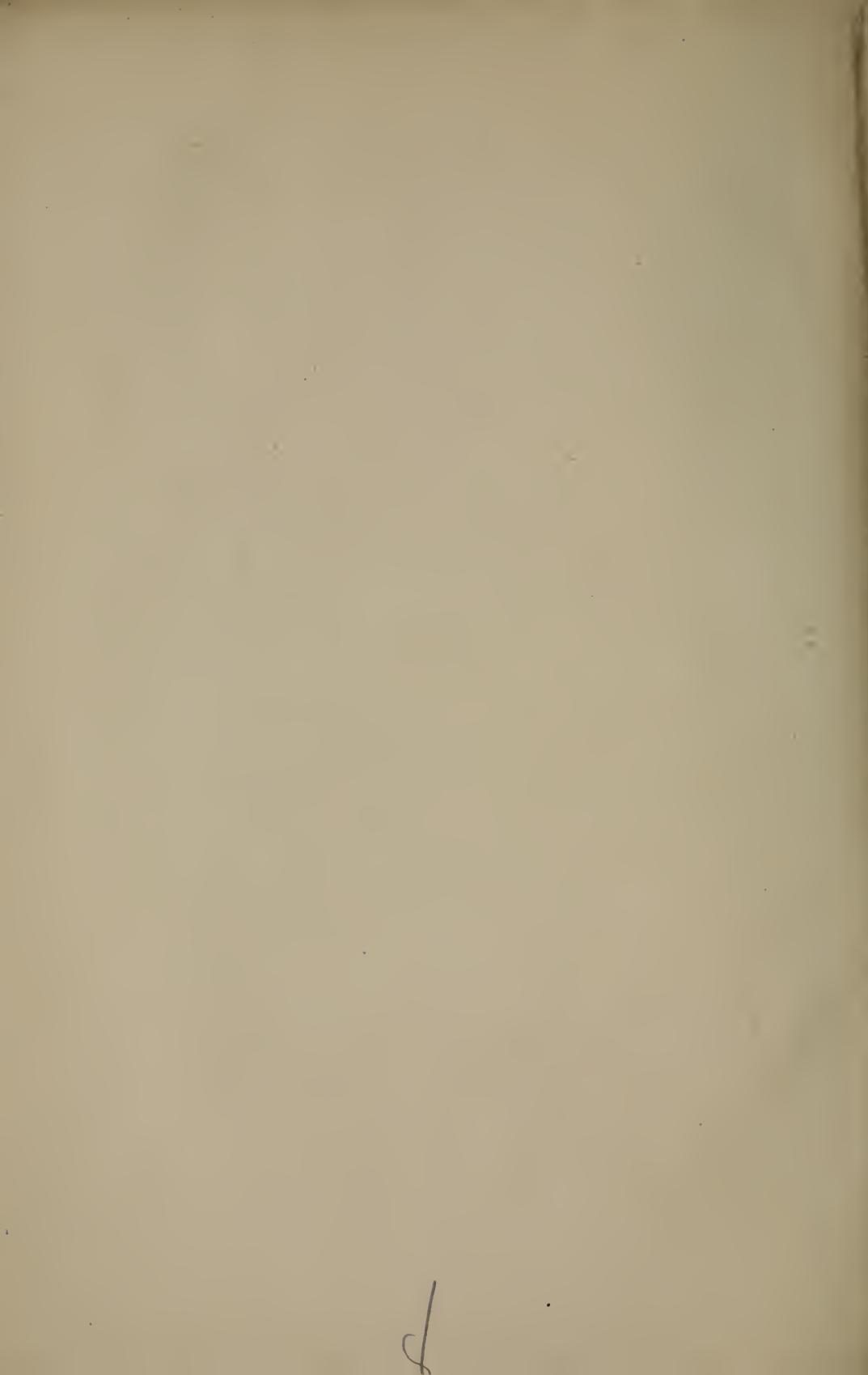
Allan went back to Oxford, and for a fortnight read really hard, and made up his mind that, until Mods. came on, he

would do nothing else but read. Alas for the frailty of human nature! A week after the beginning of term he had got into the old habit of contentedly doing nothing again. George remonstrated with him, and Allan, in his airy way, said.

‘ Oh, don’t fret, George. I shall get a second all right—they said I was up to a second when I came up, if I only knew the Logic and the Poetics. I have read them pretty well. I couldn’t get a first anyhow, so what does it matter. One doesn’t come to Oxford to stuff a lot of mouldy knowledge into one’s head—one comes to see life and enjoy oneself.’

So it went on, and at the end of the summer term Allan went in for Mods.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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